

LIMITS OF SETTLEMENT: RACIALIZED MASCULINITY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE  
IMPERIAL PROJECT IN COLONIAL NATAL, 1850-1897

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

Nineteenth century settlers viewed the British colony of Natal in southern Africa as an ‘empty’ territory ready for European bodies. These immigrants sought to create a settler state that would outnumber and supplant indigenous bodies already present. As a result, settlers attempted to defend their claims to a colony threatened by a numerically superior ‘foreign’ population by creating and maintaining forms of proper raced and gendered behavior over the bodies of all peoples in Natal. I argue racialized masculinity must be understood as instrumental to both the establishment and contestation of British sovereign imperial power in colonial Natal.

Using settler newspapers, missionary periodicals, British and South African archival sources, and popular contemporary travel accounts, this dissertation looks at the development of the colony of Natal in the second half of the nineteenth century by examining debates over polygamy and *ilobolo*, legislation over alcohol and marijuana use, proper dress and domestic inhabitation while on mission stations, and the many circulations of the Zulu king Cetshwayo kaMpande. I argue that race and masculinity developed discursively as categories through the quotidian interactions between differing peoples in colonial Natal. Subsequently, the colonial state attempted to pass legislation that used these raced and gendered categories in order to buttress their own claims to authority. Yet these attempts were never secure; indigenous and Indian peoples constantly challenged the claims of a colonial state to mobilize race and masculinity. Thus, the study of colonial Natal in the nineteenth century offers insight into the limits of settlement—the failure at a settler state to enact full control over raced and gendered discourses within the colony.

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## **Chapter One: Unsettling Colonialism: Reading Racialized Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1850-1897**

Although settlement is recognized as a critical component in both South African and British imperial history, neither historiography has fully accounted for its significance in the making and unmaking of regimes of sovereignty, authority and power in the global landscape of the late nineteenth century. It is not sufficient to understand solely the political, economic, and military factors that led to the establishment of the colony of Natal as an entry point in British-controlled southern Africa. Rather, recognizing how a variety of actors from administrators to colonists to indigenous and migrant observers imagined imperial power in Natal requires intensive study of the unstable processes surrounding the colony's creation, which reveals the limits of settlement as both an aspirational project and a daily reality on the ground. In this dissertation I offer a detailed analysis of the years 1850 to 1897 in Natal, a period in which social relations were repeatedly destabilized by systems of race and gender unfolding in the collision between communities constructed as white, African, and Indian. I argue that such an analysis reveals the challenges that advocates of a settler society faced and the role played by those who sought to contest them.

In this configuration, chronology is particularly important, with the year 1879 operating as both a pivotal year of both change and continuity. While the British military attempted to reframe the Anglo-Zulu War of that year in terms of imperial victory after a devastating defeat at Isandhlwana, the subsequent capture and destruction of the Zulu capital at Ulundi did not, as they hoped, end imperial threats and shore up colonial power. Rather, 1879 represents both a turning point in political and military histories and a simultaneous point of continuity. For even if Natal's settler elites imagined themselves victorious and their hegemony over the Zulu

kingdom secure, the next two decades would reveal how completely precarious Natal's success truly was. Even the defeat of the Zulu monarch, the formidable Cetshwayo kaMpande (1840-1884) was not permanent. As I explain further in chapter five, the myriad social and political currents running through the colony carried the monarch to London and back to Ulundi where he was ultimately reinstated as king in 1883. Therefore, it is important to understand 'Natal' as both an imperial project of settlement and a series of unstable, contradictory processes that worked at cross-purposes as men and women, settlers, migrants, and indigenes alike battled, contested, and competed to make claims to legitimate occupation of a contested colonial territory. In this way, then, can we understand what South African and British imperial historians have both neglected in their study of a colonial frontier territory that both reaffirmed and deeply challenged contemporary imperial and settler colonial formations in the late nineteenth century.

The British government established the southeastern African colony of Natal in 1843 after forcibly annexing the then five-year-old Voortrekker polity of Natalia, a space carved out by land-hungry Dutch speaking farmers from the lands of Nguni language speakers<sup>1</sup> recently

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<sup>1</sup> The term Nguni language speakers is somewhat unwieldy to describe the African peoples who lived in Natal prior to British annexation, but it underscores the lack of a unifying descriptor for these groups in the 1830s and 1840s. Historians have discussed at length the process by which these peoples came to be known as Zulu, and their disparate dialects systematized as isiZulu. Much of this process took place throughout the colonial period, in response to settler attempts to achieve hegemonic control in the colony. In general, I will use the term 'indigenous' and 'African' interchangeably to describe these Nguni language speakers throughout the dissertation, and occasionally 'Zulu' where such designation seems most appropriate. For more on the complexities of these terms see: Jeff Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: Civil War in Zululand 1879-84*, 3rd ed. (University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 1994); Benedict Carton, John Laband, and Jabulani Sithole, *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu, Past and Present* (Columbia University Press, 2009); Michael R. Mahoney, *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Robert J. Houle, *Making African Christianity: Africans Reimagining Their Faith in Colonial South Africa* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011); Norman Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880: African Communities in Natal, Pondoland & Zululand* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); Peter Limb, Norman A. Etherington, and

under the hegemony of the Zulu royal house led by Shaka kaSenzangakhona (r. 1816-1828) and later his brothers, Dingane (r. 1828-1840) and Mpande (r. 1840-1872). The colony of Natal served for many years as a somewhat neglected outpost to imperial officials in London as well as a space of intense contestation between a tiny settler minority and a far more numerous indigenous population. Soon after the annexation, the skeletal colonial government and miniscule white settler population (including many former Dutch speaking trekkers and a small coastal community of British traders) attempted to render the unruly spaces and indigenous populations legible to colonial eyes. Echoing work of earlier settler societies across the globe, Natal's new government sought to cordon off indigenous land reserves and enshrine African custom into a recorded and accessible code of native law. While the indigenous African population was scattered widely across the roughly drawn boundaries of the colony, and lacked a unifying ruling structure, they still vastly outnumbered the remaining Dutch-speaking trekkers and small numbers of British settlers in the first decades of Natal's existence.<sup>2</sup> With the arrival of the Byrne settlers in 1850, Natal's first major immigration scheme, and continuing throughout the century, Natal's nascent white population sought to increase their numbers in order to legitimate their political claim to the colonial territory. Yet to the frustration of white politicians in Natal, immigration continued to be slow, and the indigenous African population continued to grow steadily. In addition, Indian migrant laborers, first procured by settler planters wishing to develop Natal's sugar industry, began to arrive in increasing numbers beginning in 1860. By the time of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, just before the revolutionary changes in the region

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Peter Midgley, eds., *Grappling With the Beast: Indigenous Southern African Responses to Colonialism, 1840-1930* (Boston: Brill, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> As Michael Mahoney has convincingly argued, the 'Natal Africans' of the mid-nineteenth century were not a homogenous 'Zulu group,' as they would later become under more centralized colonial intervention and indigenous resistance in the later colonial and early Union period. Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*.

brought about by the Boer War, extensive migrant labor moving to the Transvaal's mines, and the colony's entry into the Union of South Africa in 1910, Natal could count itself as one of Britain's dominions with responsible government and a measure of settler self-rule. However, the self-government of Natal, unlike the other dominions (save for the Cape), remained very consciously a minority regime, increasingly committed to maintaining power and privilege based upon hierarchies of race and gender.

As a settler society with a relatively unique demographic formulation and geographic position, Natal provides an ideal vantage point from which to study the uneven realities of British imperial sovereignty in the nineteenth century. By looking at a 'local' settler space such as Natal, this dissertation focuses on an edge of empire as a means of seeing the circulation of power and ideas across imperial spaces—between colony and metropole but also across intracolonial sites.<sup>3</sup> Studying Natal in the latter half of the nineteenth century implicitly challenges the official claims of a unidirectional imperial project of expanding civilization and indigenous acculturation. To the contrary: parliamentary papers, newspaper editorials, and personal letters reveal the fears of imperial officials that emigrant men would fail to create a proper and ordered territory. In light of these sources we are in need of an interpretation of settler societies like Natal that takes into account the intersectionality of race and masculinity amid fears of colonial contamination from indigenous influence. These fears demonstrate that lines of civilization and order could move in several directions at once, undermining imperial claims to sovereign power over a region like Natal. Indeed, throughout the empire, indigenous peoples did not meekly submit to the pulls of capitalist economic processes or Christian

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<sup>3</sup> The idea of the 'edge' is best articulated in Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*, Studies in Gender and History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3.

acculturation.<sup>4</sup> They could—and often did—selectively appropriate ideological or cultural ideas for their own use, often forging links across trans-imperial spaces as distant as New Zealand, India, and North America.<sup>5</sup>

South African historiography on Natal has presented the colony's history primarily from the perspective of social and economic history. These approaches have been primarily structured by nineteenth-century (and later apartheid) divisions, creating racialized histories of settlement, colonialism and contestation. Early histories of the colony from Bird's *Annals of Natal* to Alan Hattersley's *Portrait of a Colony* were largely settler self-narratives, focusing entirely on the development of a colonial society with scant attention to African or Indian presence.<sup>6</sup> Responses to these works, like Brookes and Webb's *A History of Natal* (1963) sought to alleviate this settler solipsism but still focused primarily on the economic and social development of white colonial structures, despite their professed desire to write "an impartial history of the three groups of immigrants who built Natal--Africans, Europeans and Asians—and to consider their economic and social as well as their political life."<sup>7</sup> By the 1970s, Marxist-oriented scholars began challenging the settler-centric narrative, offering 'revisionist' histories that focused on the

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<sup>4</sup> A considerable amount of scholarship exists on indigenous forms of resistance, accommodation, and reinterpretation to nineteenth century British imperialism, of these, some of the more relevant examples are: Keletso E. Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead! Give Us Our Money!: The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993); Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 1991); Clifton C. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> John Bird, *The Annals of Natal: 1495 to 1845*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 1888); Alan Frederick Hattersley, *Portrait of a Colony: The Story of Natal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Harry Brookes and Colin de B. Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1965).

economic underpinnings of settlement, focusing particularly on the aspirations of the colonial state to appropriate and exploit the labor of African peasants and Indian migrants in pursuit of imperial markets. On a larger level, South African historians worked to challenge the liberal adoption of the American frontier thesis. This South African iteration located conflict and racial segregation in unsettled and uncivilized frontiers, predominantly in the eastern Cape Colony, although this approach was challenged strongly by revisionist theorists, particularly Martin Legassick. Legassick turned this theoretical formulation on its head, arguing that the frontiers were not the exporters of racial segregation to the colony writ large, but rather, that the frontiers existed as an extension of inherent violence within a labor regime centered in the larger colonial society.

Legassick and other historians such as Shula Marks and Bill Freund signaled a rise in Marxist-centered historical approaches to colonial Natal, ones that looked at the interactions between settlers, Africans, and Indians as primarily existing within class antagonisms between aspirational ruling settlers who sought to simultaneously proletarianize Africans and Indians within the colony.<sup>8</sup> These approaches did much to dismantle the unproblematic liberal historiographical approach of multiracial development in spite of regrettable segregation and discrimination. However, they themselves also ran the risk of overly determining the categories of ‘Indian’, ‘African,’ ‘settler,’ and assigned dialectical categories (worker/passenger, for instance in the case of Indian migrants) that obscured as much as they revealed.<sup>9</sup> Since the late

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Legassick, “The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography,” in *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (London: Longman, 1980); Bill Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban, 1910-1990* (London: Heinemann, 1995); Shula Marks, “The Historiography of South Africa: Recent Developments,” in *African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?*, ed. B. Jewsiewicki and David Newbury (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc, 1985), 165–177.

<sup>9</sup> Critiques of these generalized schema can be found in Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, “The Passenger Indian as Worker: Indian Immigrants in Cape Town in the Early Twentieth Century,” *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (April 1, 2009): 111–

1970s, histories of Natal have tended to focus particularly on either the military and political aspects of settler society, the development of Indian laborers and their negotiation of colonial restrictions within the colony, or the economic and social aspects of the Zulu kingdom, which existed independently from the colony until 1897.<sup>10</sup> This is not to dismiss in any way the productive, powerful, and nuanced nature of these works. Rather, they indicate the racialized divisions that have characterized much of South African historiography since the late 1970s. South African historical work on Natal focuses primarily on one particular racialized group within the colony. There have been pointed and productive points of divergence from this model, most notably in the work of Julie Parle and Nafisa Essop Sheik.<sup>11</sup> Both Parle and Sheik have taken on the daunting task of attempting to write an integrated history of Natal, one that accounts for the many moving parts of the colonies history, placing these racialized narratives in the same temporal frame. Yet both authors still divide their work primarily in a tripartite framework that examines each racialized group within a chapter of their own. However, both Parle and Sheik provide examples of critical methodologies that cut through pre-existing historiographical divides in order to tell integrated histories of Natal. Likewise, my dissertation seeks to analyze nineteenth-century Natal while still keeping its messy, multi-sided histories at

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134, doi:10.1080/00020180902827498; Nafisa Essop Sheik, "Colonial Rites: Custom, Marriage Law and the Making of Difference in Natal, 1830s - C. 1910" (PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*; Jeff Guy, "Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 1 (1987): 18–37; John Laband, "Longcast in Zululand: The Paradoxical Life of a Transfrontiersman, 1850-1900.," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 15, no. 1 (October 20, 1995), <http://www.history.ukzn.ac.za/ojs/index.php/jnzh/article/view/211>; Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*; Robert Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1880-1920* (Pretoria: UNISA, 2001); Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie and Uma Shashikant Dhupelia, *From Cane Fields to Freedom: A Chronicle of Indian South African Life* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2000); Ashwin Desai and Goolam H. Vahed, *Inside Indian Indenture: A South African Story, 1860-1914* (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Julie Parle, *States of Mind: Searching for Mental Health in Natal and Zululand, 1868-1918*, 1st ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Univ of Natal Press, 2007); Sheik, "Colonial Rites."

the fore. I do this primarily by privileging moments of coalescence and temporary convergence in the midst of the larger cacophony of colonial society.

In response, this dissertation is an unapologetic cultural history of nineteenth century Natal, albeit not an exhaustive one. I rely on discourse and depiction in a variety of sites ranging from colonial legislative sessions and settler newspapers to missionary field reports and popular metropolitan travel literature in order to trace the ways in which gender and race shaped economic, political, and social realities in Natal. Race and gender, far from being *a priori* conditions manipulated by an omnipotent colonial elite, instead crystallized in the resultant quotidian collisions between peoples in the southeastern African colony. This is not to say that race and gender were then immediately causal factors in the creation of colonial Natal. Rather, I argue these identity formations, at the moment of their very negotiated and dynamic generation, produced a constant state of making and unmaking in the context of colonial settlement. In particular incidents, from legal marriage debates to marijuana panics in the settler press, race and gender—as articulated in the immediate context surrounding these colonial encounters—solidified in brief moments of shared signification. These shared significations could be mobilized by a variety of actors seeking to advance their own claims to belonging, inhabitation, or power in colonial Natal. Therefore, I propose a study of nineteenth-century Natal that focuses on moments of temporary coalescence that allowed for constellations of race and masculinity to become operational in the daily claims and counterclaims of belonging in such a contested colonial space. Such a move avoids the earlier pitfalls of racially segregating Natal's histories into reified white, African, and Indian spheres of development and also allows for a heightened degree of fluidity in studying the movement of bodies throughout Natal.

The focus in this dissertation on the contest between settler and indigenous masculinities in social and cultural relations suggests military power has been over-determined in much of Natal's historiography, as evidenced in the considerable field of Anglo-Zulu War studies.<sup>12</sup> Instead of emphasizing the immediate conquests of colonialism, an act that then reduces much of the terrain to a Manichean formation between European colonial hegemony and contrapuntal African resistance, I emphasize the micro-operations of power that shaped the contours of race and gender in colonial Natal. Attention to these daily constellations of power makes it possible to emphasize the weaknesses of the colonial project while not ignoring the violence that constantly structured its operation. It, too, allows me to look at forms of racialized masculinity aside from that of the hyper-masculine martial African in European imagination. This dissertation, then, offers a view of Natal history that shifts away from the domain of military domination toward more granular power formations.

In addition to arguing for a more integrated and *cacophonous* read of colonial Natal than previously expressed in South African historiography, this dissertation seeks to engage with British imperial historiography by bringing Natal more firmly into conversation with larger debates over empire. When British historians have bothered to address Natal at all as part of their larger schema, it inevitably is to offer a passing glance at the colony as part of the larger series of mid-century indigenous rebellions (linking the Zulu to Afghanistan, Benin or even possibly the Metis of Red River).<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, Natal features as a mere appendage to larger (and

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<sup>12</sup> John Laband, *Zulu Warriors: The Battle for the South African Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); John Laband and Ian Knight, *The Anglo-Zulu War* (London: Sutton, 1996); John Laband, *The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1998); Ian Knight, *British Infantryman vs Zulu Warrior* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> This is particularly obvious in the *Oxford History of the British Empire*; in the nearly 800 pages of volume 3 (the nineteenth century), less than twenty discuss Natal or Zululand, and then only in passing as part of a larger southern

anachronistic) ‘South African’ stories, either appending to British border conflict in the Eastern Cape or battles for supremacy over the Boers in the last years of the century.<sup>14</sup> In either event, Natal becomes subsumed in larger questions of empire. Yet Natal has much to inform British scholars about how imperialism operated.

As a nineteenth-century settler colony that never saw its demographics tilt in favor of the colonizers (a feat that happened in most other Anglophone settler colonies, barring Rhodesia and Kenya in the twentieth century), Natal occupies a uniquely interstitial space that puts pressure on both the categories of ‘settler colony’ and crown colony.<sup>15</sup> Within British historiography there are myriad models, although three larger trends in writing on the nature of empire can be perhaps roughly distinguished: the ‘rhetoric of the imperial mind,’ modifications of the ‘core to periphery’ model, and the ‘webs and mobility’ model. While these broad-based concepts vary in scope and cogency, each should at least be considered for their relative merits and shortcomings in adequately addressing the juggernaut that is the imperial project, particularly within British historiography. A view of the British Empire from Durban (or Pietermaritzburg or Ulundi) has the potential of refracting in powerful ways previously understood circulations of imperial power. Studying the arguments of Natal’s settler legislators, indigenous converts, and Indian

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African colonial narrative. Andrew Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> This is most apparent in Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> By crown colony, I refer to formal colonies of occupation that were not planned for permanent European settlement. While there were certainly myriad models of difference within this frame (from British Honduras to India to Hong Kong), these places were characterized by the lack of a critical mass of European settlement with the intent to replace/supplant the indigenous population.

migrants disrupts views of a uniform ‘imperial mind,’ complicates a simple core and periphery vision of the empire, and adds nuance to a web/mobility model of imperialism.

The ‘rhetoric of the imperial mind’ argument can be traced to the Cold War theorizing of Robinson and Gallagher, who sought to re-examine the trajectory of British imperialism in light of then-contemporary decolonization and a postwar transformation of Britain’s global role. In “Imperialism and Free Trade” (1953), they argued that formal empire (the outright political control of territory) and informal empire (the economic or cultural hegemony enacted in a particular region) were, rather, two sides of the same imperial coin. “The conventional interpretation of the nineteenth-century empire continues to rest upon study of the formal empire alone,” decried Robinson and Gallagher, pithily stating that such a view “is rather like judging the size and character of icebergs solely from the parts above the water-line.”<sup>16</sup> Querying previous periodizations between early Victorian ‘anti-imperialism’ and a pro-imperialist craze in the late nineteenth century, Robinson and Gallagher maintained that British officials did not act according to the rigid framework prescribed by earlier historians. For Robinson and Gallagher, there was no real difference to be seen in the larger strategic goals of establishing ‘responsible government’ in the white-dominated dominions and the military conflicts against the Afghans, Zulus, or Benin.<sup>17</sup> Rather, these were both interrelated, means by which British officials attempted to manipulate events into positions more favorable to political or economic interests of Whitehall and Westminster. The legacy of this hypothesis remains its powerful assertion that informal and indirect means of control *must* be understood as attempts to advance British interests in their own right, instead of failed attempts at formal domination. Yet this model is not

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<sup>16</sup> John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1, New Series (1953): 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

without its own shortcomings. While the framework established by Robinson and Gallagher offered a useful integration of ostensibly separate models of imperialism, it simultaneously managed to take imperial officials at their word regarding their own ability to make policy and decisions, a viewpoint further compounded in their later work with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*.<sup>18</sup> These views have been elaborated or moderated at length by later British historians, but at its core, such an imperial view over privileges a simplified and at times ahistorically powerful official mind, to the detriment of indigenous peoples and local colonists or administrators.<sup>19</sup>

African historians have offered a sustained criticism of this idea of the ‘official mind’ at least in its capacity to act with such free reign. Brett Shadle’s work, particularly in his analysis of the colonial government’s use of ‘traditional’ *ritongo* courts to enact a form of indirect rule over the Gusii people in Kenya, demonstrate the continued inability of British imperial officials to control urbanization or the gender roles of younger generations of Gusii men and women.<sup>20</sup> Shadle emphasizes how dependent colonial officials were on both metropolitan public opinion and the work of men and women ‘on the ground’ who may have held vastly differing views—such as missionaries. Likewise, Elizabeth Schmidt, writing on Southern Rhodesia, asserts that

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<sup>18</sup> Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 1978). It is certainly telling that the subtitle of tome is “the Official Mind of Imperialism”—while the book continues to offer persuasive analyses of political/economic decisions, it is still predicated on the larger idea that the official mind was singularly powerful enough to enforce much of its will, a viewpoint that colonial scholars have been relatively united in disavowing.

<sup>19</sup> These elaborations are most apparent in the work of Cain and Hopkins and John Darwin. Cain and Hopkins issue their own correctives to Robinson and Gallagher but at the same time overprivilege the figure of the ‘gentlemanly capitalist,’ which comes laden with its own overdeterministic faults. Darwin’s use of ‘bridgeheads’ as an analytic is productive, but they still leave very little room for indigenous agency. Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins, *British Imperialism: 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (Longman, 2001); John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion,” *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 447 (1997): 614–42.

<sup>20</sup> Brett L. Shadle, *Girl Cases: Marriage and Colonialism in Gusiiland, Kenya, 1890-1970*, 1st ed. (Westport: Praeger, 2006).

colonial officials were often unable to exert their will among the Shona peoples.<sup>21</sup> She maintains that officials often made alliances with conservative elder men at the expense of Shona women in an attempt to shore up its own power in the region.<sup>22</sup> Schmidt's feminist critique of the imperial project in Southern Rhodesia reveals that the attempted control of African women revealed the inability of colonial officials to enact the desires of their superiors in London. Historians of Africa have issued useful correctives of their own to the narrative established by Robinson and Gallagher; while the 'rhetoric of the official mind' is a useful framework for interpreting and understanding the realities of British imperial policy, its top-down approach and over-privileging of officialdom leaves it open to sustained criticism as it does not sufficiently address how the realities of bodies, labor, race or gender operated 'on the ground,' as it were.

The 'core to periphery' model as I have defined it, like the 'rhetoric of the imperial mind,' is capacious enough to incorporate the views of several varied scholars. These interpretations take a view of empire that sees the metropole (London, or by extension the larger British Isles) as the ostensible cultural and intellectual center of empire that radiated lines of

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<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, & Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Heinemann, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> This view is supported in South African historiography by Jeff Guy, who argues for a similarly weak and inventive colonial state that depended on patriarchal alliances with Africans in order to enact their own hegemonic goals. Benedict Carton agrees with this somewhat in his view of late nineteenth-century administration of Zulu men in Natal, although he argues that this primarily existed to sow intergenerational conflict between elder leaders and their sons. These views are somewhat disputed by both Michael Mahoney and Teresa Barnes. Mahoney maintains that hegemony is over-privileged by Africanist scholars; a colonial state 'too weak to hate' was actually able to effect limited forms of control, albeit depending, parasitically on indigenous legitimacy. Likewise, Barnes argues that African women were not so easily manipulated in these ostensibly Faustian bargains, at least in colonial Rhodesia. Jeff Guy, "An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal" (presented at the Conference on Masculinities in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban, 1997); Benedict Carton, *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (University of Virginia Press, 2000); Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*; Teresa A. Barnes, *We Women Worked So Hard: Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (James Currey, 1999).

direction to the imperial peripheries that ringed the globe. Ultimately, these analyses argue, if British expansion was rapacious or oppressive, it was universalist and benign in its intention—if not its implementation. While these views have been criticized in particular by postcolonial scholars, they are still quite popular and must be considered as a working assumption of the particulars of empire.<sup>23</sup> One significant iteration of this conception can be found in the collection *The Victorian Vision* edited by John MacKenzie.<sup>24</sup> *The Victorian Vision* stresses an understanding of empire that accepts relatively uncritically the idea of Victoria as a metonym for Britain and views with relatively few problems the domination and occupation of a quarter of the globe's surface by the British by the end of the nineteenth century. Instead, the technological and cultural achievements of the London-dominated core and its 'vision' that extends unilaterally across the spaces of the map receive special attention. Empire is, in this configuration, simply a 'global vision' adopted by the queen and by proxy the entirety of the metropole that could then incorporate the rest of the larger world on metropolitan terms. This view has a tunneling effect that obscures colonized voices within the empire, both in the vaunted core and its obscured periphery. Victoria herself becomes a symbol—a white, domestic one, no less—of the entire imperial project that reinforces a particular understanding of what the metropole should look like (white, heterosexual, domestic, respectable) and what the civilizing goals of empire actually were. This view (and others like it, particularly in Cannadine's *Ornamentalism*) continues to reinforce the idea that domestic spaces of the metropole were somehow either inviolate of

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<sup>23</sup> This relatively benign/modernizing view of empire that privileges notions of a core and periphery has found its way to several recent (and popular) titles, including Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, UK, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> John Mackenzie, ed., *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain* (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2001).

colonial contact, or only existed to enact influence on those external spaces. Antoinette Burton suitably criticized this imperial view as “a series of high-status spectacles which happened ‘over there’ and were beamed back home, but which had no lasting impact on the ‘national,’ let alone the regional or the local.”<sup>25</sup> While the core-to-periphery model does rightfully emphasize that power did on some levels, flow from London, like the ‘rhetoric of the official mind’ model, it obscures the co-constitutive relationship between domestic and external in the British Empire. It also substantially obscures the presence and impact of ‘colonial’ peoples within the British Isles itself, or assigns them token roles as symptoms of the domestic’s ability to effect ‘progress’ in foreign populations.

The final model, ‘webs and mobility,’ seeks to interpret imperial history as a series of interconnected, co-constitutive spaces. While acknowledging that official minds made policy and that London attempted (and occasionally exercised) a form of hegemony over external spaces (and often articulated this hegemony in a liberal and inclusive discourse), this ‘new imperial’ model combines feminist and postcolonial theory in a way that seeks to question the very underpinnings of imperialism.<sup>26</sup> Imperialism in this formation, then, is still a process in which a domestic center seeks to exert a form of political and economic hegemony, but it also is far less sharply delineated than imperial officials may acknowledge. Echoing Fanon’s assertion that ‘Europe is literally the creation of the Third World,’ these historians have argued for an

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<sup>25</sup> Antoinette Burton, “Déjà Vu All Over Again,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 3, no. 1 (April 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Major examples of these re-centering historiographies, often organized under the problematic label of ‘new imperial history,’ include: Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and The ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 1995); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 1998); Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

understanding of the way in which imperialism both makes colonized spaces as it (re)forms and (re)creates the domestic core.

In *Orientalism and Race*, historian Tony Ballantyne locates ‘Aryanism’ in a larger discourse of British knowledge about colonial peoples, but he also asserts that the idea of Aryanism could be used by various peoples across the empire. Describing Maori and Indian responses to British domination as remarkably outward-looking and comparative in their focus, Ballantyne claims that the workings of the ‘official mind’ could only go so far as indigenous peoples could seize on rhetoric as well, echoing the ‘messiness’ of empire evidenced by Africanists like Shadle and Schmidt. Claiming that these colonial locations interacted with and without London, Ballantyne posits a “multi-sited history of empire that neither privileges the metropole nor accepts the nation-state as the self-evident unit for historical analysis.”<sup>27</sup> Imperial histories rooted in a study of gender add still further nuance to an understanding of empire. Focusing on British Columbia as a location uniquely situated to challenge prevailing historical conceptions of British imperial power, Adele Perry’s work is structured around both the intense white male homosocial culture in the British Columbia backcountry and, for imperial elites, the alarming prevalence of interracial relationships between male settlers and indigenous women. Perry links racial ambiguities in British North America’s hinterland with the attempts to create a more secure settler society in the underpopulated imperial outpost to larger questions over race, gender, and subjecthood in the larger British Empire. For Catherine Hall, the traditional histories of Victorian Britain, with its emphasis on gradual political representation, industrial development, and political expansion are incomplete if not seen in simultaneous development and understanding with imperialism. Arguing that “property was no longer the basis of the

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<sup>27</sup> Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*, 14.

suffrage, but ‘race’, gender, labour and level of civilization now determined who was included in and excluded from the political nation,” Hall repositions ‘domestic’ British history as imperial, demonstrating the complex, tense relationship between ‘out there’ and how it shaped the domestic world of the British in a very real way.<sup>28</sup> While acknowledging the unequal power dynamics at play in imperial politics that privileged London, critical imperial historians like Hall and Ballantyne emphasize that hegemony could work in opposite directions, and that colonial cores were hardly the inviolate workshops of ingenuity presented in visions like MacKenzie’s.

The ‘webs and mobility’ model of new imperial history does offer a sustained and useful critical apparatus for viewing how empire is created and enacted in British history. It simultaneously recognizes the ability of individual actors to shape colonial histories while also destabilizing the easy unilateral direction of historical writing from core to periphery. The ‘webs and mobility’ model is the most effective in its ability to include individual agents, the realities of daily life, and offer a sustained re-framing of the relationship between ostensible metropole and imagined peripheries. Such an approach pointedly avoids rendering colonial spaces as particularly exceptional, instead emphasizing larger circuits of settler mobility. Natal, therefore, offers a generative site of inquiry into the operation of British imperial power in the nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, the colony existed as an outpost extension of British imperial ambitions in the southern Arica region, but remained connected to larger political, economic and social currents operating in the wider world. Natal’s relatively unique position as a colony planned for European colonial settlement in the midst of a far larger indigenous population, however, make it a critically important site of study. The emergent field of settler colonial studies, like much of South African historiography and British imperial history, offer

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<sup>28</sup> Catherine Hall, “Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867,” *New Left Review*, no. 208 (1994): 29.

valuable insights into the colony but have been little explored within the field. Natal does more than simply fit within the schema of a settler colonial study, however; its demographic, social, and political positioning challenges the claims and larger stakes of settler colonial studies.

Emerging from postcolonial theory as well as critical regional studies, settler colonial studies as a field has recently developed as a transnational and critical field of engagement with colonial regions of European settlement. At its best, settler colonial studies situates the inherent conflict between indigeneity and settler nationalist claims to belonging within a larger framework of marginalization and appropriation, foregrounding the historic violence that structures these nationalist assertions of autochthony<sup>29</sup> in sites of recent European settlement. “Settler colonialism destroys to replace,” as Patrick Wolfe baldly stated. “Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event.”<sup>30</sup> Wolfe’s work, which is situated primarily in an Australian context, specifically emerged within the field of genocide studies. For Wolfe, settler colonies differs from colonies of extraction (or non-settlement) in that the colonizer literally comes to stay; unlike in other colonial societies where the colonizer eventually returns to the metropole, the nature of occupation is naturalized and daily enacted in an emergent national form.

Wolfe’s formation was furthered into a more systematic field of study by fellow Australian researcher, Lorenzo Veracini.<sup>31</sup> In *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*,

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<sup>29</sup> When referring to settlers I prefer to use the phrase ‘autochthony’ and ‘autochthonous’ to differentiate from indigeneity and indigenous and to seek to avoid using the term ‘native’ where possible, given its particularly vexing history in southern Africa. Autochthony is different in this context as it seeks to be a replacement form of indigeneity, one that is claimed and understood through previous claims of indigenous peoples.

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

<sup>31</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Veracini attempts to systematize the operations of settlement around the globe, from North America to Australasia and beyond. Primarily for Veracini, settler colonialism can be understood in the attempt of (generally European) settlers to permanently occupy a previously inhabited region and then subsequently justify their claim to autochthony over indigenous and exogenous (other arrivant groups that are neither indigenous nor broadly part of the settler communities) populations. For Veracini, “all settler projects are foundationally premised on fantasies ultimately ‘cleansing’ the settler body politic of its (indigenous and exogenous) alterities.”<sup>32</sup> In this formulation, settler colonialism is a constitutive project where generations of settler occupants attempt to solve the ‘problem’ of indigenous and competing exogenous peoples in their midst. This is particularly relevant to Natal, where both the ‘Native Question’ and the ‘Indian Question’ haunted nineteenth-century settlers (and indeed later generations of historians).<sup>33</sup> At its best, the field of settler colonial studies offers a potential comparative framework where scholars can understand forms of institutionalized violence and state-making in permanently colonial societies around the globe.

A far more sympathetic (and problematic) view towards settlement is found in James Belich’s ominously titled *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World*. As his title suggests, Belich is more concerned with the rapid rate of settler society

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>33</sup> This practice has continued within South African historiography, where Duncan Du Bois reproduces unproblematically the ‘Indian Dilemma’ without querying its larger relationship to settler colonialism even as he correctly locates the ambiguous relationship of exogenous groups in a settler imaginary. On a different note, Jeremy Martens locates the central paradox of even posing such a question: “The answer to this riddle was perpetually elusive, however, and only in the late twentieth century would white South Africans realise that no amount of working the oracle could solve their ‘Native Question’, and that meaningful change required them to stop posing it.” Duncan Du Bois, *Labourer or Settler?: Colonial Natal’s Indian Dilemma 1860-1897* (Durban: Just Done Productions, 2011); Jeremy Martens, “‘So Destructive of Domestic Security and Comfort’: Settler Domesticity, Race and the Regulation of African Behaviour in the Colony of Natal, 1843-1893” (PhD Thesis, Queen’s University, 2001), 13.

creation, particularly in relation to the indigenous and ‘Old World’ societies previously extant. “Settlers were not ogres,” Belich takes care to argue. “They were whining bundles of hopes and fears just like us. Indeed in many cases they were ‘us’, or at least our forebears....Settlers played migrant roulette with their own children in pursuit of dreams as well as realities, lives as well as livings.”<sup>34</sup> For Belich, settler colonialism is extraordinary particularly for its longevity; the ability of Europeans to extend powerfully hegemonic transformation over “three-and-a-third continents” in perpetuity even if it resulted in a tendency “to displace, marginalize, and even exterminate indigenous peoples rather than simply exploit them.”<sup>35</sup> Belich’s work manages to elide over the larger violence perpetuated by settler colonial societies in favor of understanding how they developed. But such a view is both ahistoric in its dialectical approach and also somewhat irresponsible in light of the real implications for indigenous peoples.

Historian Annie Coombes offers a more nuanced view of settler colonialism in response to Belich, and less institutionalized as Veracini. “The term ‘settler’ has about it a deceptively benign and domesticated ring which masks the violence of colonial encounters that introduced and perpetrated consistently discriminatory and genocidal regimes against the indigenous peoples of these regions,” she argues, noting that “in each of these countries the communities which were transformed, displaced and marginalised and the peoples who were subjected to attempted genocide through the colonial process have more recently renewed their claims for greater political representation and autonomy.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 558.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. These continents are North and South America, Australia and parts of northern and southern Africa.

<sup>36</sup> Annie Coombes, ed., *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester University Press, 2006), 2.

While settler colonial studies possesses considerable potential as a field of inquiry, it is not without its blind spots. In addition to the narrow vision argued by Belich, the field often routinely ignores settler minority regimes like Natal, Algeria, and the Cape. Wolfe maintains such a view through a tightened focus on settler colonialism that is only understood through a narrow reading of genocide. He has argued that South Africa (particularly under apartheid, but also during the colonial period) could not be properly understood as a genocidal state due to its dependence upon African labor and therefore lacked a central component of what could be understood as a core logic of settler colonialism.<sup>37</sup> Yet this reading of South Africa (and Natal in particular) is somewhat exclusive in its formulation of ‘genocide’ and settler occupation. Indeed, Natal possesses (as well as the Cape) a lengthy history of imperial genocidal logics. In 1851, British politician J.A. Roebuck argued before Parliament that “English colonists could not be placed [in South Africa] without the inevitable consequence of annihilating the aborigines. That was what had been done in New Zealand, in Australia, in North America, in all our colonies, and that was what would be done in South Africa if the present system were continued.”<sup>38</sup> Roebuck (who spent his childhood in British India and Canada) argued in favor of a global policy of elimination, maintaining that “we should dispossess them of their land, and the poor wretches would be driven back and exterminated.” The rhetoric of the ‘imperial mind’ (to echo the phrase from Robinson and Gallagher) would certainly seem to imply a genocidal logic at work in advocating for settlement in southern Africa, and an exceedingly unapologetic one at that. This view appeared to have purchase on the ground in settler circles as well. Natal settler Charles Barter stated unequivocally in 1852 that Africans, following the examples of indigenous peoples

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<sup>37</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 403.

<sup>38</sup> Great Britain Parliament and Thomas Curson Hansard, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 116 (London: Hansard, 1851), 272–276.

in North America and Australasia must follow “the mysterious law which has ordained that the brown men should disappear before the white, as the snow melts beneath the rays of an April sun.”<sup>39</sup> Certainly Wolfe’s initial reading of South Africa in general (and Natal in particular) as not fulfilling the genocidal structures of a settler colonial state is not correct; the colony factored into the eliminatory logics as imagined both by London and local politicians. Indeed, Natal fits in this larger regard, although its demographic realities differed considerably from contemporary settler colonies, ranging from British Columbia to New Zealand.

Yet as the subsequent history of Natal reveals, the anticipated eliminations of indigenous peoples did not come to pass. But then again, these logics of destruction did not ultimately come to pass anywhere—indigenous peoples continued to resist, challenge, and subvert the desires of their would-be settler replacements. What then, are we to make of a settler colonialism focused less tightly on genocide? Ultimately, Wolfe and Veracini’s formulations of ‘replacement’ as the central component of settler colonial imagination remain productive. ‘Replacement’ covers a larger vector of settler (and larger imperial) desires, mainly, the yearning for the physical lands of indigenous peoples and the critical semi-nationalist craving for the very indigeneity of indigenous men and women. Thinking through settler colonialism as an umbrella for the multiple processes through which colonists naturalize and nationalize the violence meted out to pre-existing inhabitants, allows a more flexible framework for understanding both the commonalities and the particularities of various contemporary societies of Euro-occupation. In this imagining, settler colonialism is not a discreetly bounded, instantly recognizable machine that sets about munching up indigenous landscapes and bodies in equal fashion across the globe. Rather, it exists as a framing device that recognizes competing and very noisy voices jostling

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Barter, *The Dorp and the Veld; or Six Months in Natal* (London: William S. Orr and Co., 1852), 171–72.

against each other, encompassing multiple perspectives and alternate formations. Yet these formations can coalesce in relatively harmonious arrangements towards land, occupation, and even semi-national claims of belonging. This is what I mean when I utilize the word ‘logics’ in this dissertation. Settler colonialism contains within it disparate and mercurial voices that could and did briefly harmonize with incredible resonance around questions of occupying and securing spaces for settlement in both the present and the future. These logics, then, are understood as larger discursive renderings of desire—for certain bodies to disappear (and others to increase), for certain lands to be claimed, and in the process, become distinct from the spaces settlers themselves had left. Thus, this dissertation acknowledges the productive formulations of settler colonial studies as a field while simultaneously resisting the potential to ossify settler colonialism into a systematic and always recognizable structure operational throughout the nineteenth-century world.

This dissertation, therefore, rests upon a primary assertion that Natal must be considered as part and parcel of a contemporary Anglophone settler project in the nineteenth century that stretched across the globe. It is as part of this project of global settlement, predicated upon the dispossession and marginalization of indigenous peoples in order to claim access to their lands and labor, that Natal most clearly operates. By 1879, Natal’s settler society appeared to be relatively secure; the large and independent Zulu kingdom to the northeast had been defeated by British troops and the Zulu king, Cetshwayo kaMpande, had been exiled to the Cape. In addition, the colony had secured a sustainable and profitable industry in sugar planting, depending primarily on the labor of Indian migrant workers, who labored largely on the coastal regions of the colony, south of the burgeoning port city of Durban. Yet as the nineteenth century wore on, Natal’s settler population had to face a discomfiting realization: they had failed

to surpass indigenous people in numbers, and continued as a noisy and determined minority, hoping to pursue autonomous action from the imperial government and legitimize their control over the native population. The *legitimacy of logistics*—the gradual establishment of a settler majority in the colony through external migration and anti-indigenous violence—that occurred in other settler societies like Australia, New Zealand, and Canada continued to elude Natal. As Lady Barker opined in 1877, “There is no doubt about it, Natal will never be an attractive country to European immigrants, and if it is not to be fairly crowded out of the list of progressive English colonies by its black population, we must devise some scheme for bringing them into the great brotherhood of civilization.”<sup>40</sup> This left Natal’s settler population (largely concentrated in the cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg and in pockets of farmlands in the midlands beyond Pietermaritzburg) without a demographic justification for their claims to sovereignty over the region, and weakened their claims to speak for and know what was best for the indigenous peoples of the colony, at least in the eyes of British administrators.

It is this period of transition, as Natal’s white population began to realize that they would never become like their fellow contemporary settlers, which marks the major turning point documented in this dissertation. Slowly but surely, Natal’s settler population began to agree with the assessments of men like Rider Haggard, who observed in 1882:

To suppose that the emigrant would go to Natal when he came to understand that it was an independent settlement of a few white men, living in the midst of a mass of warlike Kafirs, when Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, are all holding out their arms to him, is to suppose him a bigger fool than he is. At the best of times Natal is not likely to attract many desirable emigrants.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Anne Barker, *A Year’s Housekeeping in South Africa*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co, 1879), 207.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Rider Haggard, *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours: Or, Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal, and the Transvaal*, Second Edition (London: Trubner & Co., 1888), 68.

As a consequence, in the 1880s and 1890s Natal's settler elites sought to solidify their control over the reins of political power in the colony, and worked to limit the legal, social, and political options of indigenous Africans (and Indian migrants). It is in this moment, as settlers attempted to consolidate power, indigenous peoples challenged these actions, and a paternalist imperial government attempted to pursue multiple prerogatives, that the limits of settlement are most visible. Settlers, natives, imperial observers, and Indian workers all utilized language of race and masculinity to make claims to sovereignty and autonomy in a period of distinct upheaval and change.

What follows is a recounting of the history of Natal in the second half of the nineteenth century that pays careful attention to the intertwined nature of the discursive and the material while studying the refracting, mutable connections of a settler outpost with the larger empire. Chapter two, "'That shameful trade in a person': *Ilobolo*, polygamy, and the logics of settler colonialism in Natal, 1850-1893," examines how the Zulu practices of *ilobolo* (the ritual exchange of cattle from the groom's family to the wife's upon marriage) and polygamy became critical sites for the demarcation (at least in settler eyes) of 'proper behavior,' resulting in the creation and negotiation of claims of legitimate occupation of the land through discourses on the difference of Zulu bodies as a result of these practices. I argue that discourses of civilization and 'proper' family structures mapped onto emergent categories of racial difference in nineteenth-century Natal. Consequently, Natal's legislators attempted to shore up discursive difference through the creation and implementation of native law, a formation through which the settler state sought to quarantine threatening indigenous difference from the European population. Simultaneously, however, settler legislators worked to render their own sexual and social practices as effectively normative, a process visible in the debates over sororate marriage in

Natal. Zulu articulations of polygamy and *ilobolo* further complicated the interplay between indigenous and emigrant, resulting in a colony where race and gender could be mobilized by multiple actors in pursuit of sovereign claims in a highly contested space.

Chapter three, “Sobriety and Settlement: the Racialized Politics of Alcohol and Cannabis Use in Natal, 1856-1897,” examines settler claims to self-control and sobriety with the subsequent attempts of the settler state to legislate racial difference by restricting intoxicant consumption only to Europeans. By legally restricting alcohol usage to whites, settlers in Natal linked citizenship, camaraderie, and sociability to specific bodies within the colony while purposefully denying access to populations of color, actions other settler colonies, such as British Columbia and New Zealand, also simultaneously attempted. The attempts of the Natal legislature to establish racial distinctions in alcohol consumption throughout the nineteenth century reveal similar limitations and complexities in the creation of settler colonial power. Africans continued to find access to European-produced alcoholic beverages through a variety of channels, and the brewing of *umqombothi*, a traditional beer made from grain, could not easily be eliminated by a disapproving government. Likewise, Indians in Natal found themselves the focus of widespread settler displeasure for consuming intoxicants, but successfully managed to evade legislative limitations throughout most of the century. In contrast, marijuana was coded as a socially aberrant intoxicant that created improper forms of sociability, and disrupted the labor roles white settlers desired for Africans and Indians. Subsequently, marijuana (or *dagga*) use was constructed in records as a solely non-white activity that endangered both the economic success of the colony, but also the safety of white women’s bodies in Natal, reflecting the periodic ‘rape scares’ of the late nineteenth century. The attempts of a settler state to legislate ‘proper’ consumption—both in the racially-coded Liquor Bill of 1890 and in providing the

Governor of Natal the right to ban Indian use of marijuana—demonstrate the links between colonial civilizational discourses and the subsequent attempts to legislate racial hierarchies.

Chapter four, “The Mission Field: Civilizational Aspirations and the Politics of Transformation, 1850-1890,” explores the dynamics of the Christian mission, and the ways that protean, developing categories of race and gender could be impacted by discourses of civilizational transformation espoused by European and American missionaries. By ‘mission field,’ I mean the broader bundle of concepts, aspirations, and activities that surrounded the work of Christian conversion in Natal in the nineteenth century. As such, the mission field accommodated missionaries of differing nationalities and denominations that were all invested in the spiritual transformation of indigenous Africans. These spiritual transformations, however, were dependent upon observable physical changes—most notably in dress, domestic inhabitation, and family organization that signaled a move towards civilization. As with polygamy and intoxicants, the settler state sought in a piecemeal fashion to legislate racial distinctions, particularly in its attempt to pass the Clothing of the Natives Bill in 1880. This bill attempted to shore up claims of white civilization as depicted through ‘appropriate’ sartorial display within the colony, and built upon previous legislation that tried to compel Africans to wear suitable clothing. Settlers, imperial officials, and indigenous converts debated the idea of civilizational transformation throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century in Natal, particularly in regard to correct forms of dress and domestic life encouraged in mission stations. These conversations drew upon and strengthened developing conceptions of race and gender. The spaces of the mission station, then, reveal the limits of settlement and civilization in the colony as the legal apparatus of the state attempted to enforce raced and gendered mores in the latter nineteenth century.

The final chapter, “‘Every Inch a King’: The Metropolitan Circulations of Cetshwayo kaMpande, 1879-1884,” leaves the immediate confines of Natal and Zululand and focuses on discussions of the colony in metropolitan media, particularly surrounding the London visit of the exiled Zulu monarch Cetshwayo kaMpande in August 1882. By examining the claims of settlers, indigenous leaders, and colonial observers in the British press, I argue that depictions of Cetshwayo by the king’s supporters—and the subsequent pushback by settler elites—utilized circulating discourses of race and gender while writing directly about the Zulu monarch in order to assert claims about proper government in Natal and the right kind of governance in the empire more widely. Critically reading both the physical and discursive circulations of Cetshwayo reveals that the *limits* of settlement did not occur merely in Natal. Cetshwayo and his supporters successfully subverted the desire of the Natal’s settler government to claim exclusive control over the fate of the colony and all of its inhabitants, by presenting favorably before London society and making claims on hierarchical rights as a monarch.

My analysis illustrates how, why and under what conditions civilizational discourses that circulated in nineteenth-century Natal shaped emergent concepts of race and gender within the colony. In response, Natal’s settler government in turn attempted to pass legislation that drew upon these developing classifications in order to strengthen the power of the white minority within the colony. Looking at polygamy and *ilobolo*, alcohol and marijuana, dress and inhabitation, and imperial circulation reveals that race and masculinity—and the discourses that shaped them, could not be exclusively controlled by the settler state. Instead, the Natal legislature’s attempts to legally harness the combined power of raced and gendered formations encountered frequent resistance, and demonstrated the limits of settlement in the southeastern African colony.

## **Chapter Two: “That shameful trade in a person”: *Ilobolo*, polygamy, and the logics of settler colonialism in Natal, 1850-1893**

This chapter turns to the lengthy history of debates in colonial Natal over marital propriety throughout the nineteenth century. To do so I specifically engage with indigenous studies and queer theory in order to destabilize the presumed norms of settler colonialism and push the interpretations offered in South African and British historiography. Settler colonialism, which presupposes a demographic ledger whereupon new European immigrants must replace the indigenous peoples whose lands they hope to assume, required a determined emphasis on both physical and social reproduction in the contested colonial space. Indigenous studies-based approaches have placed the issues of land access and settler invasion at the forefront of colonial analysis. As a result, settler colonial histories become unmoored from claims of legitimacy through law or government action. Likewise, queer theory offers a means of understanding how lines of assumed order are skewed by ideas, actions, or formations. If settler colonialism itself is presented as a form of orientation, of making a recognizable and inhabitable home space for European arrivals on indigenous land, then native peoples and their continued resistance can serve to ‘queer’ these attempted forms of order.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, migrants not deemed as sufficiently part of the cultural milieu of European migrants possess the potential to disrupt lines of order and reproduction in a colonial space. Combining the insights of queer theory with indigenous critique serves to profoundly ‘unsettle’ the presumptions of a settler state to lay claim to the bodies and lands of indigenous peoples.

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<sup>42</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006).

While I argue for the necessity of understanding Natal as part of a global settler movement, it is even more important to remember that such a movement also creates global indigenous responses. As Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel have asserted, “Indigenosity is an identity constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism...It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world.”<sup>43</sup> Settler colonists and the African peoples they encountered in Natal created the personal and legal identities of settler (subject to the civil community) and native (subject to the ward-like ‘protections’ of that community) in relation to each other.

This chapter examines how, soon after arrival, European men and women began to articulate their claims to ‘naturally’ belong in the contested spaces of Natal through claims to civic inclusion, primarily understood through the utilization of marriage law, which rested upon constitutively developed concepts of race and gender. In this context, *ilobolo* and polygamy became sites of intense contestation where settlers could make civilizational claims of advancement against improper native formulation. Yet African and Indian peoples simultaneously challenged, re-shaped, and responded to these claims, creating the contours of settler colonialism in Natal. This is not to deny the immense power inequities that structured European settler relations with Indian migrants and indigenous Africans in Natal. Theorist Aileen Moreton-Robinson has crucially denoted that the systems of knowledge production throughout (post)imperial spaces have been stamped resolutely by a European claim of authority,

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<sup>43</sup> Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,” *Government and Opposition* 40, no. 4 (2005): 597, doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00166.x.

insidiously erased through the naturalizations of settler violence.<sup>44</sup> As a result, settler colonial spaces like Natal (or Moreton-Robinson's Australia) were not merely sites of intense negotiation, but locations shaped profoundly by a quotidian Eurocentricism that presumed superiority.

In addition to indigenous studies, I have found insights from queer theory have been helpful in understanding how these competing claims to belonging operate in colonial Natal. The idea of the subjectless critique in queer theory has allowed scholars to analyze not only instances in which subjects evince a sexual identification that is not explicitly heterosexual, but also the ways in which a particular actions or positions can challenging larger normative systems. A queer reading, then, can offer an exploration of how lines of assumed order are instead skewed by ideas, actions, or formations. In such circumstances, the customs, practices, and potentially the very bodies of indigenous peoples can become *queer* despite remaining ostensibly heterosexual in their orientation and practice, as their existence constantly undermines the desired order of an emergent settler state.<sup>45</sup> Following this line of inquiry, queer theorists have questioned the theoretically normative underpinnings of settler occupation and orientation of indigenous bodies (and lands). This has the potential for both producing forms of decolonizing praxis in contemporary settler societies as well as providing a powerful means of critically engaging with established normative frameworks in a wide range of settler states. Echoing Moreton-Robinson's critique of settler power inequities, Scott Morgensen combines an indigenous reading of settler naturalization with a queer challenge to normative formations:

“settlers practice settlement by turning Native land and culture into an inheritance granting them

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<sup>44</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Whiteness, Epistemology, and Indigenous Representation,” in *Whitening Race: Essays In Social And Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 75–88.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2011); Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (May 1997): 437–465.

knowledge and ownership of *themselves*.<sup>46</sup> In a colonial context, this may also mean using the specter of indigenous social and sexual formations, such as polygamy and *ilobolo*, to more clearly denote what is ‘proper’ and ‘civilized’ settler behavior.

An approach that combines queer theory with indigenous critique has the potential to profoundly ‘unsettle’ the presumptions of a settler state to lay claim to the bodies and lands of indigenous peoples. The logics of settlement, which presuppose a demographic ledgerdomain whereupon new European immigrants must replace the indigenous peoples whose lands they hope to assume, require a determined emphasis on reproduction, both physical and social in the contested colonial space. With the bodies of the indigenous peoples deemed queer for resisting the normativizing attempts of settlers, sexuality and heteronormative reproduction become paramount in a settler colonial context. The reproductive futurity established in settler states, to borrow from Lee Edelman, constitutes a privileging of the figure of the white colonial child as the hope for securing the occupation and legitimacy of the next generation of settlers.<sup>47</sup> And while indigenous peoples may not themselves be non-heterosexual, their very existence, and the existence of alternative social and sexual formations than that of the replicating settler vision presents a queer threat to imagined reproductive futurity. Andrea Smith has argued that in the genocidal context of settlement, “Native peoples have already been determined by settler colonialism to have no future....the Native Child is not the guarantor of the reproductive future of white supremacy; it is the nit that undoes it.”<sup>48</sup> While in the last years of the nineteenth century the genocidal rhetoric of settlement diminished considerably in Natal, the 1850s-1870s

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<sup>46</sup> Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Andrea Smith, “Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 16, no. 1/2 (January 2010): 48, doi:Abstract.

undoubtedly featured triumphalist narratives of indigenous disappearance and settler inheritance. The continuance of indigenous social formations like polygamy and the question of limited settler demographics continuously reveal the anxieties surrounding reproductive futurity that operated at the heart of colonial Natal. While settlers may have viewed indigenous social and sexual formations as queer threats to the reproductive regimes they hoped to establish in Natal, indigenous people clearly did not see themselves in this fashion. Rather, these very formations had the potential to enact their own normative regimes of behavior, both to resist settler co-optation and maintain internal hierarchies of power in indigenous African societies.<sup>49</sup> As a consequence, my work also pushes queer theory beyond a normative/transgressive paradigm, instead emphasizing that indigenous and settler identities could be normative and still potentially queer.

As an indigenous population located both within the borders of the colony and comprising a formidable independent kingdom (c. 1816-1887) on Natal's northeastern border, the Zulu people—and their potentially disruptive customs—figured prominently within settler society. Of particular controversy were the two Zulu practices of *isithembu* (polygynous marriage) and *ilobolo*, the traditional offering of cattle from the groom to the bride's family. While British settlers disagreed on a variety of topics, print records show considerable agreement in condemning both social practices. *Ilobolo* and *isithembu* (rendered nearly universally as

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<sup>49</sup> This is best demonstrated in the nineteenth century when Zulu men claimed that the ostensibly 'queer' practice of polygamy as a means of shoring up traditional patriarchal power over women, lest they become known as *onindindwa* (wanderers), women of dubious moral character without a male figure to guide them. For more on this, see T.J. Tallie, "Queering Natal Settler Logics and the Disruptive Challenge of Zulu Polygamy," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 1, 2013): 167–189, doi:10.1215/10642684-1957195.

“polygamy”)<sup>50</sup> were decried by British settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials for reasons that were varied and from motivations that were quite frequently highly contradictory. Yet the linked specters of polygamy and *ilobolo* loomed large in settler debates, crystallizing in a largely shared sense of opposition to these indigenous practices.

By utilizing the critical heft of indigenous studies and queer theory to connect Natal to larger contemporaneous settler logics of replacement and occupation, I pursue a considerable re-reading of imperial history and settler colonialism that critically views intracolonial connections while firmly rooted in a local space. To do so requires an understanding of the potential ‘queerness’ of indigenous social and sexual formations. I argue that settler colonialism as a larger project depended upon heteropatriarchal discourses developed co-constitutively within the interplay between metropole and colony. These discourses, as I have stated, emphasized the value of reproduction in an already occupied space, and resulted in the creation of normative gender and sexual identities in each colonial location. In Natal, these settler conversations operated upon a substantial investment in the idea of polygamy and *ilobolo* as aberrant, dysfunctional, and threatening to the security of the emergent colonial state.

However, these practices were certainly not accepted by Zulu peoples as being aberrant or unnatural. Settlers sought to construct and perpetuate ‘natural’ marital and social relationships within the colony, actions that Zulu men and women resisted, reinterpreted and responded to at various points. Yet Natal’s white settler society was hardly a uniform model of conjugal

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<sup>50</sup> While British settlers referred to *ilobolo* variously as bride-price, wife-buying, and ‘reverse dowry,’ I choose to use the *isiZulu* term as its translation is rather difficult to capture in English. Some settlers noticed this as well, as several writers simply referred to the practice by its verb form, *ukulobola*, in English texts. I do however use the less precise term ‘polygamy’ rather than polygyny or even *isithembu* as it was nearly universally rendered as such by English speakers during the period.

superiority. Newspaper editorials and legislative debates indicate that indigenous polygamy and *ilobolo* offered both a continuous reassurance of European claims to civilization and moral authority in the face of perceived barbarism for many settler observers. However, the two indigenous formations also served, then, as fears for what settler society could degenerate into. As a result, polygamy and *ilobolo* also served to discipline potentially aberrant marital and social practices among white Natalians in pursuit of security for imagined future generations. These contestations over polygamy and *ilobolo* reveal the limits of settlement in colonial Natal, as settler claims to legitimacy through the moral rectitude conferred through supposedly more equitable gender relations ran headlong into the persistent and powerful logics of the indigenous peoples that outnumbered them ten to one.

Soon after their arrival, settlers marked the sexual and kinship practices of Natal's indigenous peoples as aberrant and dangerous. Perhaps no practices elicited greater settler outrage and anxiety than Zulu practice of polygamy and *ilobolo*. Settler newspapers, emigrant accounts, and missionary pamphlets in the 1850s and 1860s (particularly after the colony was established as a separate political jurisdiction from the Cape in 1856), increasingly decried "the iniquitous practice" of polygamy and the enslaving transactions of *ilobolo*.<sup>51</sup> These calls against Zulu marital customs were central to the logic of settler colonialism. As the British attempted to establish a polity within the new colony of Natal, they instituted projects of labeling, ordering, and 'correcting' forms of sexual-social production and kinship organization.

The purposes of this chapter, then, are twofold. First, I wish to examine how *ilobolo* and polygamy became critical sites for the demarcation (at least in settler eyes) of 'proper' behavior,

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<sup>51</sup> *The Natal Witness*, April 24, 1857.

for both settlers and indigenous peoples in the colony. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century these indigenous marital and social practices served as a significant battleground where settlers and indigenous observers both offered profoundly raced and gendered claims to legitimately occupy the contested spaces of Natal. For settlers, the remaking and re-orienting of African bodies away from ‘savagery’ into civilization took a visible form in the fight over polygamy. Secondly, I argue that a resultant legal compromise evolved over the course of the nineteenth century where settlers reserved civil law unto themselves and relegated indigenous practices to a codified sphere of management named “native law.” This legal and social maneuver attempted to both bolster (while simultaneously defining) standard settler practice as the norm against indigenous practices while also working to quarantine polygamy and *ilobolo* in an invented traditionalism described by historians like Terence Ranger.<sup>52</sup> This compromise, however, was an imagined solution to the inherent problems of settler colonialism. In everyday interactions, settlers, Indians, and Africans created ideas of race, gender, and sexuality that the legal apparatus of the colonial law attempted to domesticate and control. Yet, as the repeated coalescences over irregular marital practices indicate, the settler state in Natal could not be secured by legal legerdemain. Rather, these legal and moral wrangling demonstrate the slipperiness of colonial social formations, and the ways in which race and gender could be marshaled on all sides in changing contexts to press claims for belonging, control, or legitimacy.

### **The Stakes of Theorizing *Ilobolo* and Polygamy in Colonial Natal**

Why did indigenous social and sexual practices like polygamy and *ilobolo* offer such a challenge to the settler project in Natal? Ultimately, the two practices became flash points in a

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<sup>52</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

broader struggle over significance in the settler colony, both for their role in indigenous economic processes and in colonial discussions of propriety throughout the century. Polygamy and *ilobolo* existed as discrete yet deeply interlinked concepts—although most marriages among Nguni-speaking peoples in the pre-colonial era involved some form of contractual acknowledgement through the exchange of cattle, certainly not all marriages were polygamous in nature. Yet in the nineteenth century, both processes became even more deeply enmeshed as a result of two long-term developments in colonial Natal. First, colonial economic coercion led to a transformation of pre-existing socioeconomic processes that governed much of indigenous African life, from gendered divisions of labor to social hierarchies within local communities.

Secondly, polygamy and *ilobolo* were linked more tightly through racialized and gendered discourses of morality articulated by British settlers who struggled to render such practices comprehensible on their own terms. As British settlers attempted to understand, demarcate, and reshape the colonial spaces they occupied, social formations like polygamy and *ilobolo* became more than means of ensuring economic and social reproduction for Africans. Rather, as an emergent settler state sought to codify legal systems and ‘straighten’ the disorder created through colonial governance, polygamy and *ilobolo* became part of a raced and gendered means of interpreting indigenous peoples and societies, a process Renisa Mawani has termed juridical truth-building.<sup>53</sup> This juridical process is essential to understand the colonial project in Natal, yet its implementation directly occurred as a result of a *discursive* truth-making, as non-legislative observers penned critical views of polygamy and *ilobolo* and demanded governmental recourse to the ‘problems’ of indigenous social formations. This discursive environment

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<sup>53</sup> Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Univ of British Columbia Pr, 2009).

facilitated and fueled the machinery of settler governmentality, which culminated in the establishment of a separate Native Law and the legal recognition of customary polygamy under Law 1 of 1869.

For indigenous Africans, both immediately before and during the advent of colonial rule in Natal, polygamous relationships served several functions. For men in power, they acted as a means of controlling access to women of marriageable age, reinscribing hierarchical relationships between older and younger generations.<sup>54</sup> They also allowed for forms of economic and social production well adapted to the veldt of Natal through the combined labors of wives and husband in an *umuzi*, or homestead-based agricultural/pastoral economy. In her study of nineteenth century Zulu social formations, Keletso Atkins has argued for the complex, communitarian, and multifaceted role that polygamy played in the *imizi*.<sup>55</sup> Rather than a simple purchase, Atkins argues that *ilobolo* could function as an investment in the labor and productivity of the household, allowing for new opportunities for economic growth while further connecting kin in links of obligation that increased a sense of commitment to the success of the *umuzi*.<sup>56</sup>

A vigorous debate exists in South African historiography surrounding the power and position of women in pre-colonial Zulu societies, despite the difficulty of accessing the interior voices and opinions of indigenous women in the mid-nineteenth century. Jeff Guy and Cherryl

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<sup>54</sup> Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*, 32–44; Carton, *Blood from Your Children*; Sean Hanretta, “Women, Marginality, and the Zulu State: Women’s Institutions and Power in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of African History* 39, no. 3 (1998): 389–415.

<sup>55</sup> Plural of *umuzi*.

<sup>56</sup> Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*, 42. Atkins specifically traces the ways in which *ilobolo* could be used to acknowledge investment in the labor of a new wife in an *umuzi* while acknowledging the reciprocal debt to be paid on order to provide for future *ilobolo* for the new wife’s daughters.

Walker have argued that pre-colonial gender hierarchies structured the very underpinnings of Zulu economic and social arrangements. Guy has in particular argued persuasively that the *umuzi* system and as a result larger political organization depended upon the extraction of women's agricultural and domestic labor power by men.<sup>57</sup> This assertion has been further refined by Sean Hanretta, who argued that while Zulu women labored in unequal gender relations, they did have access to alternate, albeit lesser, forms of power due to their necessity in agricultural production.<sup>58</sup> Sifiso Ndlovu, through his use of Zulu oral traditions, particularly *izibongo* (family praise songs), contends that the 'gender oppression' theorization is not necessarily accurate. For Ndlovu, Zulu agricultural roles were not as rigidly prescribed as Guy or even Hanretta maintain. Ndlovu points to the role of powerful women within the royal family as well as the *amakhanda* (barracks) and *amabutho* (military regiments) in disputing that Zulu women operated in a singularly gender-oppressive environment. Ndlovu advances his argument particularly by describing the immense power wielded by Mkbayi, the legendary aunt of Shaka.<sup>59</sup> The resultant debates point to a considerably complex set of power relationships between Zulu men and women prior to the arrival of British settlers. While agricultural productivity was certainly organized around the domination of women's labor, it is far less certain that women were completely constrained by these gendered relations or viewed their own normative marriage and social formations as inherently oppressive.

European observers in Natal interpreted the complex gendered relations that comprised Zulu society within entirely different frameworks. Atkins maintains that white settler

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<sup>57</sup> Guy, "Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa," 22–23.

<sup>58</sup> Hanretta, "Women, Marginality, and the Zulu State," 392–93.

<sup>59</sup> Sifiso Ndlovu, "A Reassessment of Women's Power in the Zulu Kingdom," in Carton, Laband, and Sithole, *Zulu Identities*, 111–121.

assumptions of racial superiority utterly blinded many employers to the possibility that Zulu men and women might have “had their own agendas, with their own clear-cut goals and strategies for achieving them” through familial networks and social/sexual formations like polygamy and *ilobolo*.<sup>60</sup> Whether or not Zulu women themselves saw polygamy as a means of negotiating their position in an agrarian society mattered very little to settlers. In newsprint, missionary pamphlets, and travel literature, Natal’s settlers consistently depicted women as oppressed under the barbarism of their men—particularly through *ilobolo* and polygamous marriages.<sup>61</sup> The majority of settlers read indigenous gendered systems of labor as institutionalized female drudgery and depicted *ilobolo* to the simple purchase of a wife (or multiple wives, in the case of polygamy). Settler authors painted a picture of indigenous social formations as both deviant and degrading to ‘proper’ gender order. As an editorial in the Durban-based *Natal Mercury* put it succinctly, the primary problem in the colony was “woman-slavery, inducing indolent habits in the men.”<sup>62</sup> Polygamy and *ilobolo*, then, challenged the ability of Europeans to properly enact biopolitical controls over indigenous peoples to support both normative conceptions of gender order and the economic needs of an emergent settler state.

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<sup>60</sup> Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> A brief list includes David Dale Buchanan, “The Polygamy Question,” *The Natal Witness*, February 8, 1856; Natal Evangelical Alliance (Durban Sub-Division), *Polygamy and Woman-Slavery in Natal: Report of a Special Committee Appointed by the Durban Sub-Division of the Natal Evangelical Alliance: Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Society, Held in the Wesleyan Chapel, Durban, May 23, 1861* (Durban: “Natal Mercury” Office, 1861); Natal (Colony), *Questions Offered By, and Replies Transmitted To, the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of Natal, Appointed 6th June, 1861, to Collect Information on the Subject of Polygamy, as Now Practiced among the Natives, and Its Attendant Evils, with a View to the Initiation of a Policy for the Suppression of the Same* (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis and Sons, 1863); Hyman Augustine Wilder, *A Review of Dr. Colenso’s Remarks on Polygamy: As Found Existing in Converts from Heathenism* (Durban: J. Cullingworth, 1856); Thomas Phipson, *Letters and Other Writings of a Natal Sheriff: Thomas Phipson, 1815-76*, ed. Ralph N. Currey (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1968); Josiah Tyler, *Forty Years among the Zulus* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-school and publishing society, 1891); James Erasmus Methley, *The New Colony of Port Natal;: With Information for Emigrants. Accompanied with an Explanatory Map by the Government Official Surveyor*, 3rd ed. (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1850).

<sup>62</sup> *Natal Mercury*, March 23, 1869.

Indeed, the continued practice of polygamy among African men and women exposed the limits of European social control and authority. With both a minimal settler population and military presence in its first decades, colonial Natal frequently demonstrated the limits of European hegemony over sexual practices and mores. Like other frontier settlements of the British Empire in the mid-nineteenth century (such as British Columbia and New Zealand), Natal was host to a number of white men who themselves either engaged in interracial, polygamous, same-sex, or other nonheteronormative social/sexual formations.<sup>63</sup> By making polygamy and *ilobolo* the main focus of the attacks, settler authors could obliquely attempt to police their own polities or at least render them more legibly heteronormative by comparison. These practices were abominable in settler eyes largely because of a presumed moral inferiority that manifest in a gender inequality that settlers claimed that they themselves lacked. However, moralist claims to legitimate occupation due to ‘proper’ social practice were not as monolithic as some Natalians may have imagined. The moral attacks on these formations also served to discipline settler behavior, as the legal cases of surrounding ‘unorthodox’ settler marriages and press depictions of ‘degenerate’ British men demonstrate.<sup>64</sup> Natal was not alone in its project of demarcating indigenous social projects along raced and gendered lines of propriety; indeed, much of the

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<sup>63</sup> Perhaps most (in)famously, Natal settler John Dunn eventually married 48 Zulu women and served as a counselor to the Zulu King Cetshwayo in the 1860s and 1870s, demonstrating a perhaps extreme case of settler departure from gendered/raced norms that were being developed. Henry Francis Fynn, the first British settler in Natal in 1824, married a Zulu woman and had children before eventually discarding his wife in favor of a European partner and ‘respectable’ family in the 1850s. For more on British Columbia and New Zealand, see Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, illustrated edition (University of Illinois Press, 2008); Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*.

<sup>64</sup> An October 13, 1848 article in the *Natal Witness* condemned the report of a white man ‘purchasing’ an African wife, like cattle, demonstrating an ostensible failure in raced and gendered forms of respectability that were developing in a colonial context. For more on disciplining settler marital practices in colonial Natal, see: Sheik, “Colonial Rites”; Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*; T. J. Tallie, “Racialised Masculinity and the Limits of Settlement: John Dunn and Natal, 1879-1883,” *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 30, no. 0 (2012), <http://www.history.ukzn.ac.za/ojs/index.php/jnzh/article/view/1327>; Charles Ballard, *John Dunn: The White Chief of Zululand* (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker, 1985).

Anglophone settler world of the nineteenth century expressed similar settler fears of indigenous ‘degeneracy,’ acknowledging the precarious and constructed nature of settler claims to the lands they occupied.<sup>65</sup>

Contemporary rhetoric that attempted to categorize polygamy and *ilobolo* as disturbing, degrading social practices reveals considerable anxiety over the viability of settler social reproduction. As the editorial for the *Natal Mercury* wrote 1863, “the atrocities of Native Law...[and] the so-called ‘successful management’ of the Kafirs was fraught with untold danger in the future to our posterity if not to our ourselves; and all these deductions were made from, and supported by, facts which are of every-day occurrence, and were set forth in their bearing upon the moral and social system of the colony.”<sup>66</sup> When settlers argued that polygamy and *ilobolo* made Zulu men brutish attackers of Zulu women, they implicitly disciplined their own masculinist behavior, but they also demonstrated their fears for settler futurity. How would a white settler Natal remain secure for the sake of their unborn children and grandchildren, wondered many members of the settler community, if the degradation caused by these indigenous practices persevered? These fears manifested within a variety of legal and political interventions in the colony throughout the nineteenth century, from the constantly revised body of ‘traditional’ Native Law (through which the colony recognized polygamy and fixed *ilobolo* at a set number of cattle) to the reformation of settler marriage practices to shore up colonial claims to respectability.

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<sup>65</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> *Natal Mercury*, Feb 18, 1863. This is a consistent theme in the *Natal Mercury* and the *Natal Witness*, particularly surrounding the passage of Law 1 of 1869, which is discussed further in this chapter.

The linked concepts of polygamy and *ilobolo* offered a consistent reference point for settler anxieties over social reproduction in an intensely contested colonial space. By marking polygamy and *ilobolo* as aberrant, white settlers used the social formations as a means of constructing a raced identity that bolstered their claims to belonging in the colony. Yet Zulu men and women certainly did not see themselves or their social formations as aberrant or *queer*; indeed, both concepts were entirely normative for indigenous peoples, and deeply woven into the fabric of everyday life. As a consequence, the debates surrounding these formations offer an significant source of study for Natal, and for more generally for settler colonialism and imperial history. Polygamy and *ilobolo* represented the worst fears of Natal's settlers (about themselves and indigenous peoples), a means of potential resistance for Africans, and proof that the raced and gendered contours of the colony were not mere window-dressing for the 'more important' economic, political and social questions at the time. Indeed, as Anne McClintock has argued, "imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of gender power" for "no social category exists in privileged isolation; each comes into being in social relation to other categories."<sup>67</sup> Rather, the discourses that circulated around the concepts of polygamy and *ilobolo* in nineteenth-century Natal had direct legal, economic, and social implications for the wider colony. These indigenous formations and the many responses to them in colonial Natal demonstrate that race and particularly gender are wholly constitutive in comprehending nineteenth century attempts of settler capital to manipulate African labor in Natal as well as simultaneous indigenous resistance to these actions.

### **Quarantining the Colony: Space, Contagion, and Legal Solutions**

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<sup>67</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 6–8.

Following the annexation of Natal by the British in 1843, a nascent colonial government attempted to bring political and social order to bodies—both citizen and subject—under its ostensible authority. Faced with an increasing confusion over the status of the varied Boer, British, and indigenous populations, Natal’s Legislative Council enacted Ordinance 3 of 1849, which reserved ultimate authority over the indigenous population for the Lieutenant-Governor and authorized the institutionalization of customary or ‘native’ law for indigenous peoples, separate from civil law for white settlers.<sup>68</sup> Although ambiguous in its early implementation, Ordinance 3 gradually evolved through the 1850s, enshrining cultural practices like polygamy and *ilobolo* under the aegis of native custom. This followed the previous establishment of indigenous land reserves in the late 1840s, which created both a legal and physical space apart for Natal’s African population, out of the immediate reach of labor-hungry colonists. While the colonial government in Natal wished to exert more totalizing power in order to compel African labor for white farmers (and establish a sustainable economy for the nascent and struggling colony), they were constrained by the practical realities of controlling a far more numerous indigenous population. As David Welsh said, “The early Victorians may have been suffused with a confidence in the superiority of their own culture over indigenous native cultures, but this outlook was tempered by the realization that natives would resist attempts to assimilate them to another culture, particularly if these attempts involved forcible onslaughts on their institutions.”<sup>69</sup>

It was as a result of these tense moments of authority-questioning that the colonial government in Natal authorized a Commission of Inquiry into the state of indigenous life and practice. Tellingly, white farmers comprised the majority of the 1852-53 Commission’s

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<sup>68</sup> David John Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 21–23.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

respondents; no evidence was taken from Africans themselves.<sup>70</sup> The Commission produced a narrative profoundly hostile to the paternalistic approach to indigenous control offered by the Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone.<sup>71</sup> In particular, the majority of those surveyed by the Commission argued that indigenous land tenure was a danger and that social customs like chieftainship, polygamy, and *ilobolo* needed to be eliminated post-haste in order to provide both for the advancement settler civilization and to facilitate demands for African labor in the colonial economy. In its final report, the Commission merged these two concerns, arguing that polygamy and *ilobolo* allowed for a threatening competition with white farmers for economic viability, a condition, “drawn from the forced labour of females...[and] evidence of the increasing means of sensual indulgence available to the males.”<sup>72</sup>

The act of physically reserving land separately for the sole use of natives in Natal occurred concomitantly with the work to reserve a legal subject status separate from the civil status of settlers. As a result, Africans were rendered separate in both spatial and embodied terms, both for the benefit of white settler society. Studying the debates over polygamy and *ilobolo* in the 1850s and 1860s offers an incisive means of understanding just how race and gender were utilized in the construction of legal and physical buffers that served to quarantine the ostensibly destabilizing practices of Africans from the colonial society that settlers wished to enact in Natal. Former Special Commissioner Henry Cloete announced before the 1852 Native Commission that the creation of land reserves had been a “great and fatal mistake,” offering African men “the strongest inducement possible to look to their herds for their sole support, and,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>71</sup> Shepstone was first made ‘agent’ for the native tribes in 1845 in Natal, and officially named Secretary of Native Affairs by the mid-1850s, a position he held until his retirement in 1877.

<sup>72</sup> Cited in Welsh, 34.

instead of devoting one single hour to habits of industry or agriculture, to leave their rude state of cultivating the soil to their unfortunate women as drudges if not as slaves, and themselves to continue a life of listless apathy, indolence and sensuality.”<sup>73</sup> Discursively and materially, the twin threats of polygamy and *ilobolo* offered an ideal means of encapsulating a variety of issues that challenged the nascent settler state. Indigenous autonomy, economic compulsion, questions of civilizational progress, and the dictates of Christian morality each factored in the debates that flashed across government proceedings, local newspapers, mass-produced missionary pamphlets, and personal correspondence. The body of the Zulu woman—and the debates over what should be *done* to her, whether by Zulu men or the paternalist interventions of settler society—became a crucial point in debates over the survival of a settler society in Natal.

It is here, in the midst of the cacophony of differing voices, that a pattern surrounding indigeneity, control, and quarantine becomes clearly audible. The continued existence of both polygamy and *ilobolo* in the face of settler opposition ran headlong into the rough and shifting consensus that linked settler society in early colonial Natal. The disparate voices of multinational and multidenominational clergy, farmers, and colonial officers coalesced around the threat of Zulu contamination to colonial society. Despite their many differences, settlers generally could agree upon the idea of a social order that rendered the spaces of Natal accessible for only certain kinds of power relationships extending from white observers to Zulu inhabitants and *never* in reverse.<sup>74</sup> As settler polity expanded in Natal in the 1850s, the ever present ‘question’ of indigenous formations like polygamy increased in urgency in the settler press. Settler newspapers like the *Natal Witness* and the *Natal Mercury* contained frequent editorials

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<sup>73</sup> Cited in *Natal Mercury*, Feb 18, 1869

<sup>74</sup> I am indebted to Sara Ahmed’s insight here. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 111.

debating what should be done to the moral and social scourge of wife-selling or woman-slavery among the native peoples of the colony.

In settler eyes, the existence of polygamy among Africans threatened the very gendered and raced dynamics of the colonial order they hoped to establish. Writing back to potential emigrants in the metropole, Natal settler James Methley discussed the dangers inherent in Zulu polygamy. In his popular text (which went through multiple printings in London in 1850 alone), Methley included a section from fellow emigrant George Duff, stating:

It is to be deplored, on every account, that the systematic practice of idleness in the men, superinduced by the degradation of women, by the allowed purchase of a plurality of wives for oppressive and continual drudgery, has not also been abolished. No good will be done with the Fingoes, the Kaffirs, or Zulus, until polygamy is entirely set aside. It brings on idleness in the men; idleness favours thieving; thieving creates wars, and all their attendant evils.<sup>75</sup>

Duff's reading of the social realities of Natal in 1850 is telling. In presenting African social formations as having created a despotic form of masculine authority, one in which Zulu men are able to enslave and degrade women in order to live lives of idleness, Duff echoes Wilder's claim of Zulu male debased sensuality. By exercising such arbitrary and despotic power, Zulu men fail to enact what can be deemed 'appropriate' forms of masculine behavior to Duff's eyes (and ostensibly the British audience). These allegations against Zulu masculinity, then, can also be read as means of warning settler men about their own appropriate sexual behavior. If Zulu men were locked into retrograde cycles of hyper-masculinizing oppression of women through their polygamy, then British men—inferred to be monogamous—must limit their own power relationships with their wives in order to enact an expected and proper demonstration of masculinity. It is this aberrant social formation—and at its heart the perceived regressive overuse of male authority by Zulu men—that lies at the heart of the “attendant evils” that

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<sup>75</sup> G. Duff, cited in Methley, *The New Colony of Port Natal*;, 44–45.

threatened the existence of the settler state in colonial Natal. Duff created a slippery-slope logic chain that lists the steps in which Zulu men, steeped in debasing sensuality, and then further failing at proper masculinity by their pursuit of idleness, would turn to crime and eventually war and rebellion.

Although they operated both within and outside of settler society, the many missionaries present in Natal offered continuous opinions on polygamy and *ilobolo*. Natal's missionaries were a diverse group, representing a variety of largely Protestant faiths<sup>76</sup> and a sizeable number of homelands, with representatives from Britain, Germany, the United States, and Norway among other countries and by the mid nineteenth century made Natal one of the most thickly missionized places on the globe.<sup>77</sup> Whether they stated it expressly or not, missionaries were keenly invested in the re-orientation and reframing of their indigenous charges into 'modern' social, sexual, and economic formations. The practice of polygamous marriage offered one of the most visible forms of 'incorrect' indigenous behavior in missionary eyes, and mission periodicals, settler newspapers, and even legislative committees saw frequent condemnation of the practice.

Most missionaries were, perhaps unsurprisingly, resolutely opposed to Zulu polygamy and disavowed it as a viable social formation. The most notable exception to this view was posed by John Colenso, the Anglican Bishop of Natal from 1855-1883,<sup>78</sup> who advocated a

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<sup>76</sup> This was not universally the case; beginning in the 1880s, a sizeable community of Trappist Catholic monks established a community near Durban. More will be mentioned on them in chapter four.

<sup>77</sup> Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*.

<sup>78</sup> These years are controversial; Colenso was deposed as Bishop by the Bishop of Cape Town in 1863, although this was overturned by Privy Council in London, and Colenso remained the legal Bishop of Natal until his death in 1883. See Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).

missionary policy that sanctioned polygamy on a limited basis. While he was not in favor of the continuance of polygamy indefinitely, Colenso advocated a gradualist path of social change, arguing that both polygamy and *ilobolo* were culturally coherent formations that supported family life in indigenous African society:

In compelling a Kafir husband to put away his wives, we are doing a positive 'wrong,' perhaps to the man himself, but certainly to the woman, whom he is compelled to divorce. We do wrong to the man's own moral principle—his sense of right and justice—his feelings as a husband and a man... For a Kafir has a feeling of family and home. It is an outrageous slander upon the character of these poor natives, to say that they are void of affection—that their wives are merely their slaves, their children so many conveniences, for raising money by the labour of the one sex, and accumulating cattle by the sale of the other... what right have we to assume that the practice of polygamy has degraded and debased our own poor Zulus beneath the level of the brute?<sup>79</sup>

Relying on the same tropes of family responsibility, normative masculinity, and attachment as colonial opponents, Colenso argued that abolishing indigenous polygamy and *ilobolo* would undermine both the viability of evangelism and the unity of the family.

Colenso's views, both as a missionary and more broadly in white Natal society, were certainly in the minority. Multiple pamphlets were printed in Durban and Pietermaritzburg to challenge the dangerous theology the officially sanctioned Bishop of Natal seemed to be offering in support of polygamy and *ilobolo*. Missionary Hyman Wilder was hardly alone in his refutation of Colenso's claims, arguing that for the Zulus, "the holy institution of matrimony is in ruins" as polygamy caused a husband to "blunt his moral feelings, and in sensuality place him on a level with a brute."<sup>80</sup> This charge on Zulu men served to reinforce the idea that polygamy as a sexual and social formation was not only unmanly, it was subhuman. Wilder's formulation served then to mark the subhumanity of Zulu men by their over-indulgence in sensuality. Yet Wilder's use

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<sup>79</sup> John William Colenso, *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy: As Found Already Existing in Converts from Heathenism* (Pietermaritzburg: May & Davis, 1855), 15.

<sup>80</sup> Wilder, *A Review of Dr. Colenso's Remarks on Polygamy*, 32–33.

of an ostensibly universal ‘state of marriage’ threatened with ruin simultaneously worked to delimit appropriate raced and gendered behavior for white settler men. Wilder’s pamphlet offered, in effect, a denouncement and a threat at once. While he marked polygamy as the process which engendered a barbaric masculinity in African men, its very continuance threatened moral structures of behavior in the colony’s white male population.

"If [anyone] denies what we have proved," charged Wilder, "*that the only true marriage which is a Divine Institution, is the union of two persons of different sexes for life*, and asserts that this union in certain circumstances may consist of more than ‘*they twain*,’ then we ask why it may not exist in England as well as in Natal? Why not among white men as well as black men?"<sup>81</sup> This allegation illustrates several points on which the normative framework of settler logic pivots. Wilder cuts through rhetoric to much of the actual heart of settler fears—the inability of Europeans to control the actual bodies and social formations of Africans will result in the unraveling of social connections ‘back home.’ The regulation of bodies and their attendant raced and gendered identifications—themselves formulated directly from the collisionary encounters of colonialism—thus sustains the settlement project and provides an impetus for logics of occupation. Indeed, at the height of the polygamy debates, *Natal Witness* editor David Dale Buchanan penned an anxious plea to the larger community:

If the Church's pure bosom is to open to the admission of male polygamists, why not lay down the doctrine as fairly for female delinquents? By what principle of morality, or common sense or dictate of Scripture, should the prostitute be excluded?...Come ye chaste Christian mothers, with your daughters come and sit down to the communion, in company with the new members of the new sect which is to spring up--an offshoot of Mormonism.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 33. Emphasis original.

<sup>82</sup> Buchanan, “The Polygamy Question.”

Like Wilder, the fears of polygamy are not merely for what lies in wait ‘out there,’ but for what transformations could occur internally within settler society. If Natal’s ostensibly Christian society is to make room for the sexual degeneracy of Zulu men, what is to stop the assumption of tolerance or encouragement for ‘fallen’ women, be they British or Zulu? Continuing this, Buchanan offers a specter of white women ‘converted’ to polygamy in a form of ‘Mormonism’—in effect arguing that Zulu social customs ran the risk of spreading corruption to settlers and to their normalizing institutions, like the Christian church.<sup>83</sup>

For observers like Buchanan, Wilder, polygamy and *ilobolo* had to be disavowed in Natal, or the very hierarchical structures that separated gender order and enabled a civilized/savage divide between settler and indigene would crumble. Wilder argued that to allow indigenous peoples to practice polygamy was “to throw away our old standards of right and wrong taught us by the Bible, and the experience of nearly six thousand years, and adopt those of a degraded heathen, who has...lived in a state of debasing sensuality.”<sup>84</sup> Wilder posited that if indigenous polygamy were not abolished forthwith, it would be more than a simple spiritual/moral failing; rather, the ostensible unilateral direction of colonialism—the movement of power, vitality, and civilization from Europe to Natal—runs the risk of profound disruption. If the logics of settler colonialism sought to render the colony both properly accessible only for bodies perceived as white and straight/heteronormative, then polygamy—as a profoundly non-white and an inherently non-normative practice—needed to be stopped at all costs.

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<sup>83</sup> Indeed, this would be the larger series of charges brought against Bishop Colenso in the 1850s; the Archbishop of Cape Town sought to remove him on the grounds of subverting the proper doctrines of the church and for acting outside of the normalizing scripts he imagined state-sanctioned Anglicanism must take.

<sup>84</sup> Wilder, *A Review of Dr. Colenso's Remarks on Polygamy*, 29.

It is no coincidence that in his denunciation of the legitimacy of Zulu polygamy Wilder explicitly states that marriage itself can only be valid as a “*union of two persons of different sexes.*” As the settler state itself sought to define the limits of what proper, heteronormative forms of true kinship could constitute, the core assumption of the dual-sex monogamous nuclear family unit became the only legible form of social reproduction. This itself should not be surprising, as European attempts to classify and direct bodies in the nineteenth century included not simply racializations but also the emergence of the category of sexual identity. Theorist Mark Rifkin argues that the “creation of ‘homosexuality’ as a distinct category... cannot be separated from contemporaneous rhetorics of racial perversion and imperial progress.”<sup>85</sup> These nineteenth century articulations of sexuality, difference, and normativity are encoded in Wilder’s argument and reveal the co-constitutive and collisionary nature of sexuality, gender, and race order in colonial Natal.

If European descriptions of sexual normality (which Rifkin reads generally as ‘heteronormativity’) are based in a constellation of practices that identify a properly white, bourgeois nuclear family model, then both native and non-heterosexual populations can be seen as being ‘queer’ in a sense of deviation from healthy, ostensibly ‘real’ social reproduction. Wilder’s distinction, that Zulu polygamy is a threat to the definition of marriage as a dual-sex, family-oriented union, emphasizes the nature of the settler project as directed towards forms of white bourgeois (re)production within the new colony. The continued presence of Zulu polygamy, of enduring indigenous social/sexual formations marked as queer and disruptive by colonists and missionaries alike served to demonstrate the *limits* of settler hegemony that undergirded Natal’s very legitimacy. Zulu men could then be seen as rendered dangerously

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<sup>85</sup> Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, 32.

over-sensuous by the lustful lures of polygamy and the dehumanizing aspects of *ilobolo*. As a result, they could be read as a template for an excessive heterosexuality, ironically being rendered ‘hyper-straight’ through settler processes of queering indigenous sexuality.<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, the idea that polygamy could be allowed to exist as an alternate, indigenous social formation challenged settler attempts to create an expansive state that could justify its acquisition of territory through its obligation to re-make the region and its inhabitants. The rhetorical attack on polygamy drew significant strength from a near-axiomatic equation of the practice with female slavery. By deploying this strategy, settler observers could redirect any discussion onto safer ground—rather than enter into religious debates over the humanity of Zulus or their ability to create social formations on their own terms, the slavery argument immediately marked polygamy as illegitimate, retrograde, and destructive in the discourse of post-abolition Britain.

An angry letter printed in the *Natal Witness* demonstrates both the vulnerabilities of the settler project as well as the ways in which the ‘slave turn’ could render the argument on amenable terms for colonists:

Whether the Government can sanction, by taxation or law, the crime of bigamy, is not likely long to remain a matter of doubt. We heard a few days since of a white man purchasing a Caffer wife, and if by paying a couple of cows he may be allowed to carry on this species of slave and bigamy trade...we shall soon arrive at a very high state of moral excellence as a community.<sup>87</sup>

This letter reiterates Wilder’s fears of contamination, of the corruption of the settler project’s supposed unilateral lines of direction. The figure of the ‘nativized’ white man shows a rejection of lines of reproductive desire that should orient him toward a future of reproducing white,

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<sup>86</sup> Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?: The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*, New African Histories Series (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

<sup>87</sup> *Natal Witness*, October 13, 1848.

British society within Natal. Yet this fear is quickly followed by the axiomatic acceptance of polygamy as slavery. This man ‘purchased’ his wife through *ilobolo*, the ritual exchange of cattle in order for the right to marry. This ritual is rendered as a commercial exchange that does not allow for the possibility of alternative social formulations. Rather, the indigenous wife is immediately understood as being made into a slave. This discourse of slavery offered an understanding of indigenous social formulations as exotic and depraved, ultimately challenging British claims of liberalism and rule of law. These settler and missionary writings do more than simply critique offensive African marriage practices. Rather, they also speak to larger race and gender norms at stake within the colony. From Wilder’s fears of transplanted Mormonism to the sarcastic condemnation of Natal’s “very high state of moral excellence,” these publications make clear that the ability to define proper masculine norms extended not only to Africans, but back to white men within Natal.

The direct equation of polygamy with enslavement allowed for multiple rhetorical actions to occur simultaneously. First, by immediately marking an alternate social formation as morally illegitimate, this equation erased the implicit threat that its very existence poses to the power that the settler state claimed for itself, namely to define what constitutes heteronormativity in marriage. Secondly, it allowed for a discourse of British exceptionalism by propagating liberality and freedom through their benign rule. In so doing, Natal’s settlers could claim a superior, British morality that differed from other European colonial enterprises and indeed from native men themselves, who are seen as the source of female oppression. A writer to the *Witness* asserted that:

Our swarthy neighbours should be informed that they are living under English law, and ...tell the wives already held in bondage, that England will have no slaves residing on her soil, and that the

English law, under which she is living, gives her the right, if her lord will take another wife, to enter an action against him for so doing.<sup>88</sup>

In this iteration, the British settler state in Natal became a bulwark of liberal defense against the predations of African enslavement. This discursive shift cast Zulu social practices of *ilobolo* and polygamy as ‘queer’ or inherently destructive social formations that deviated from the lines of reproduction desired by the settler state. The axiomatic adoption of polygamy as slavery attempted to obscure the challenges rendered to the very legitimacy of the settler state by the continued existence of alternate forms of sociality.

The equation of polygamy and *ilobolo* with the enslavement of African women built into ready rhetorical ‘truths’ of African masculinity. In 1869, the editor of Durban’s *Natal Mercury* decried “the frequency of [African] outrages on white females, which, we say it unhesitatingly, is to be traced mainly to that pernicious system of polygamy” prominent among a Zulu population whose numbers settlers were “powerless to resist, and impotent to guide.”<sup>89</sup> *The Mercury*’s editor reproduced a predominant settler logic that argued that the enslaving tendencies of aberrant indigenous social formations created a native population bereft of proper humanity, compelled to reproduce a dangerously hyper-sexual male populace. In these rhetorical turns, polygamy and *ilobolo* both became markers of inherent Zulu depravity as well as a call for settler authority to ‘straighten’ the disorder of Natal. The pages of Natal’s newspapers further demonstrate that settlement resulted in the creation and imposition of a heteropatriarchal order that made certain bodies queer, destabilizing, dangerous—and in need of correction, containment, and control.

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<sup>88</sup> *Natal Witness*, April 24, 1857.

<sup>89</sup> “Editorial (February 18, 1869),” *The Natal Mercury*, February 18, 1869.

While the 1850s and 1860s saw critical discussion of the very nature and practice of indigenous polygamous formations and their potential effects on the settler state, one letter to the *Natal Witness* keenly summed up the true stakes of the colonial project:

We may talk till doomsday about the location, polygamy, and apprenticeship, or labor questions; but, to my mind, it is pretty clear that we can do nothing until, by the presence of a larger European population, we are become more nearly equal with the Kafir in point of number, and are able to command without the fear of being disobeyed and laughed at into the bargain; to say nothing of more disagreeable, yet, perhaps not improbable, consequences.<sup>90</sup>

White settler colonialism in Southern Africa, much like its other contemporary iterations across the globe, consisted of a series of different attempts to re-order, re-frame and re-direct the physical spaces and indigenous peoples of territories newly claimed by Europeans. This published letter best illustrates both the similarities that linked Natal (and South Africa at large) to contemporary settler colonies and the specific differences that placed the colony on a very different historic trajectory. Settlers in Natal shared with their global compatriots plans to dominate and occupy their newly colonial homeland, reinscribing themselves as the new natives and enacting biopolitical controls over the remaining indigenous populations. Yet, the demographic evening never materialized in the case of Natal; indigenous people, even at their lowest ebb, outnumbered settlers by more than eight to one.

### **The Natal Select Committee of 1861**

During its first two decades of existence, the colony of Natal saw considerable material written by settlers and missionaries about the troublesome practices of polygamy and *ilobolo*. These newspapers, religious pamphlets, and travel literature all worked to create a form of discursive truth-building where the race and gender, categories created in the colonial collisions in Natal, were pulled into aspirational settler hierarchies. In response, settler legislators sought

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<sup>90</sup> *Natal Witness*, November 21, 1851

to build juridical ‘truths’ that matched the arguments created in this discursive world. The creation of native reserves and the development of separate Native Law in the 1850s served as the first official, state reactions to the threat of indigenous social formations. By the 1860s, however, the continued practice of polygamy and *ilobolo* by African peoples in Natal necessitated further response from the emergent settler state. In 1861, Natal’s Legislative Council appointed a Select Committee to examine the ‘attendant evils’ of polygamy among indigenous Africans, specifically with an eye to the elimination of the practice they deemed dangerous and disruptive. Over the course of next year and a half, the Legislative Council interviewed a range of prominent white men in the colony by means of a nine question survey.

The survey asked, among other items:

- 1.—In your opinion, is the practice of polygamy among the Kafirs one of the chief causes of degradation of the female sex among them; or is that degradation attributable to the savage state of that nation?
- 2.—Is polygamy a chief obstacle to the civilization of the Kafirs?
- 3.—Would the suppression of polygamy tend to promote habits of industry among the Kafirs; or does polygamy induce them to seek labour, for the purpose of acquiring the means of increasing the number of their wives?
- 7.—Would it be prudent or safe to enact a law, declaring all polygamous marriages entered into after a certain time illegal; and if so, is immediate legislative action desirable?
- 8.—Would a law, prohibiting polygamous marriages after a certain date, be seriously resisted by the natives?
- 9.—If any law be enacted, declaring polygamy illegal, do you believe that with the present magisterial and police establishment at our command such law could be enforced?<sup>91</sup>

The questions, aside from being fantastically, almost humorously leading in their scripting, reveal much about the ‘problem’ that polygamy (and *ilobolo*) presented to settler society (and particularly the men that claimed to represent that society) in Natal. The first two questions specifically hinged upon assumptions of African civilizational fitness. Tellingly the first question immediately presumes that indigenous peoples are inherently savage and degraded—indeed, it is only a matter of whether polygamy is the cause or merely the symptom of what is seemingly

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<sup>91</sup> Natal (Colony), *Questions*, 3.

implied to be a ‘natural’ state of moral and social decay. While the first two questions speak to the discursive and rhetorical dimensions of settler colonialism—the presumed inferiority that requires and subsequently welcomes European settlement for the purposes of uplift—the remaining questions listed move to address the material economic and social realities of continued colonial occupation. Question three begs a blunt assessment of the economic transformation desired colonists: namely, how does polygamy factor into the ability for settler capital to compel African labor into waged relationships directly amenable to the colonist? Continuing on, questions seven through nine inquire into the capability of the emergent settler state to enact to the coercions potentially suggested in the preceding queries—how safe, how capable, how advisable are such measures? The questions offered by the 1861 Select Committee on Polygamy, and the answers they received, are immensely helpful in ascertaining the larger discursive, economic, and legal concerns educed by the ostensibly aberrant and stubbornly independent indigenous practices of polygamy and *ilobolo*.

The respondents to the Select Committee’s questionnaire represented a wide array of Natal’s white male settler society: rural farmers, missionaries of all manner of denominations, politicians, magistrates, and businessmen were all represented in the exchanged correspondence. No women were recorded as responding to the questionnaire; the Select Committee’s responses, then, offer a purposefully chosen set of white, male perspectives on the question of polygamy and *ilobolo*. While marked variation is visible in the Committee’s gathered responses, moments of coalescence are readily apparent amid the cacophony of the colonial archive.<sup>92</sup> For settler men, polygamy and *ilobolo* represented an interlinked chain of social formations that not only

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<sup>92</sup> The questioned members of the committee appear to have been chosen primarily for their economic, social, or religious prominence within the colony. No further reason for their selection is given in the document itself.

locked African women into retrograde cycles of drudgery and men into brutality, but also directly contradicted imperatives of Natal's white society to reorder the land and population into designs more economically and socially amenable. As a result the men surveyed appeared to agree relatively consistently that these practices created undesirable gender dynamics that should be redirected in the name of settler civilization and African progress.

Repeatedly, the queried settlers asserted that polygamy was a primary agent in the maintenance of indigenous backwardness, made manifest through the oppression of African women. The Reverend J. L. Döhne encapsulated the Natalian view most directly, with the following reply:

If the savage contented himself with one wife only, he would find more reason to regard her, and she to prove herself of greater value to him. But since polygamy gives him occasion to prefer one above the other, he suffers the other, or causes her, to fall into degradation. And besides this, the sex is systematically trained for such a state of degradation.<sup>93</sup>

Such a formulation advances a view of polygamy as inequality at its very core due to the initial spousal preference established by the existence of multiple 'options.' Döhne reported (as did most respondents, with depressing regularity), that African women were systematically ruined by a social custom that supported overarching male power that subsequently dragged men down in brutishness and women in enslavement.

Thus, the idea of polygamy offered a powerful discursive counter to 'proper' settler imagined forms of conjugality. Respondents argued that settler civilization (and hence their legitimacy in the colony) was justified through a display of marital propriety, the lack of which simultaneously demonstrated the inherent barbarism of indigenous Africans. Sugar planter and

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<sup>93</sup> Natal (Colony), *Questions*, 12.

court registrar Aling Osborn furthered Döhne's assertions of savagery by recourse to an indigenous 'economy of womanhood, asserting Zulu men viewed polygamy:

chiefly as the easiest means of obtaining cattle, a Kafir's wives being to all intents and purposes his slaves, with only this exception, that he calls them his wives, and cohabits with them with the view of breeding girls for sale, who are fattened up, at the expense of the male children, so as to ensure good prices. In purchasing a woman the Kafir is not influenced by any of the finer feelings, of which I may say he is void.<sup>94</sup>

Such slave analogies served not only to make a crucial site of difference between settlers and indigenous forms of social organization, but to also obscure the economic coercions of African men and women that colonial economies themselves demanded.

Despite basing their legitimacy of occupation upon a conception of inherent British civilization regarding the treatment of women, respondents made clear that they did not advocate 'full' gender equality. With this in mind, Anglican missionary and amateur ethnographer Henry Callaway warned of the potential disruptions to patriarchal supremacy in the abolition of polygamy:

My own experience would lead me to say there is a manifestly marked improvement in every respect, except, perhaps, that in their new position they are less disposed to labor, and to be obedient to their husband's word. Feeling themselves more on an equality with the male, they are apt to assume, as is but natural, more than really belongs to them.<sup>95</sup>

Callaway's quote reveals much about the inherently gendered and hierarchical nature of the settler project—while Zulu women are suitable rallying points for state intervention in their defense, these women are *not* to be seen as “on an equality with the male”. Indeed, the ostensible humanitarian intervention of the (male) settler legislator is not to challenge patriarchal logics, but actually to confirm racialized ones. Despite calling for a curbing of overweening black male power over Zulu women, effectively Callaway is calling for what Guy has similar termed elsewhere as an 'alliance of patriarchs,' a constitutive, masculinist order where white

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 7.

men claim to speak for black women against black men, but still acknowledge a shared language of male entitlement.<sup>96</sup> Such an alliance, however, flattens the autonomous choices of African men—and more importantly, African women—in responding to the demands of a colonial state.<sup>97</sup>

Aside from the gendered anxieties attendant in the question over the continuance of polygamy and *ilobolo*, the Select Committee questionnaire reveals much about the stakes of settlement, particularly around the imagined ability of colonists to control the bodies and labor of Africans. Settler and missionary respondents differed widely over the potential implications for indigenous labor if polygamy was reduced, although they agreed upon one thing: natives *must* be compelled to labor, or the settler project itself would come to ruin. Magistrate Henry Francis Fynn had reservations about the imagined link between abolishing polygamy and the coercion of indigenous labor for settler needs. In his response to the questionnaire, he asserted that:

each married pair would prefer cultivating their own soil, and selling their produce, rather than engage in fixed labor with European agriculturalists. This is exemplified by professing Christian natives, no longer practicing polygamy, on mission stations throughout Southern Africa. These people rarely, if ever, seek servitude, but aspire to be masters or landed proprietors.<sup>98</sup>

While settlers frequently called for the moral transformations of indigenous Africans in order to abolish polygamy, the indifference by many of the secular respondents in the questionnaire to African Christianity shows clear differences between settlers and missionaries in the period. Indeed, for all its moral heft, Christianity ranked as a less important advance than establishing secure labor and protecting proper gender order in the colony.

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<sup>96</sup> Guy, “An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal”; Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, & Wives*; Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*; Carton, *Blood from Your Children*.

<sup>97</sup> The strongest critique of the ‘patriarchal alliance’ theory advanced by those like Guy and Schmidt can be found in Barnes, *We Women Worked So Hard*.

<sup>98</sup> Natal (Colony), *Questions*, 57–66.

Further elaborating on the question of polygamy and economy in Natal, Fynn seemed to cast doubt on the likelihood of a peaceful resolution if Europeans forcibly attempted to stop polygamy and *ilobolo*. However, Fynn was quick to reassert the settler colonial trope of the vanishing indigenous to justify both the occupation and the superseding claim of settlers to the land:

The past experience of centuries teaches us that all attempts of European nations to colonize the countries of unlettered races have resulted, sooner or later, in the latter being conquered by the former, and ultimately dispersed or annihilated by them.<sup>99</sup>

It is no coincidence that a settler discussion concerning the continuation of polygamy rests upon an idea of a fundamental, final clash over occupation. Indeed, the contemporary Natal Evangelical Alliance—a multi-denominational body of missionaries opposed to polygamy—argued in 1861 that very same line:

If the inferior race do not disappear, one of two things must happen;—either the *savage* race will become civilized, (to which, in the case before us, the degraded state of the women presents an insuperable barrier), or the *civilized* will degenerate, and those who come into more immediate and familiar contact with savage and brutal life, will themselves probably become savage and brutal.<sup>100</sup>

The larger stakes of polygamy become readily apparent upon reading the Select Committee's report—while the gendered and racial social hierarchies that support settler colonialism were disturbed by the continued existence of Zulu polygamy, it was truly the economic and demographic realities of polygamy that alarmed most commentators. While continuing to advance the notion that settlement would bring about a destruction of indigenous population (and the creation of a white dominated settler polity that would force the remaining native peoples into amenable labor relationships), these pieces dangerously begin to interrogate what might happen if this indigenous vanishing does *not* occur. In this vision, the 'degeneracy' of African

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Natal Evangelical Alliance (Durban Sub-Division), *Polygamy and Woman-Slavery in Natal*, 9.

social formations would corrupt ostensible English civilizational virtue. Consequently, the unidirectional enactment of settler economic and cultural imperatives over African lands and bodies is put at risk by the both the continued persistence of not only indigenous practices, like polygamy and *ilobolo*, but of the peoples themselves.

“These two practices of *woman-selling* and *polygamy* are intimately interwoven, naturally acting and re-acting, as cause and effect; and aggravating the evils inseparable from each,” declared Aldin Grout at the committee meeting of the Natal Evangelical Alliance, a non-legal body of interdenominational clergy against the indigenous practices.<sup>101</sup> For Grout and the other members of the committee, both *isithembu* and *ilobolo* were significant not simply for their sinfulness and aberrance; they were key aspects of moral failure that illuminated both the limits of settlement as a discourse of civilization and served as a condition that clearly united colonists and clergy as a settler society against indigenous social formations that could potentially disrupt their claim to supremacy. “Thus, *avarice* and *sensuality*, the two vices of our fallen nature which more than any other stifle the better principles of humanity and debase the whole man, whether in a civilised or in a savage state, are naturally excited and fostered...to this baneful effect on the Kafirs themselves,” he continued.<sup>102</sup> Thus linked, the two social formations become discursively aligned as specters that threaten ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ alike, echoing fears of white indigenization and ‘regression’ at the hands of the numerically superior Zulu, queering the ostensibly correct flow of influence from European to African.

Yet despite the majority of recorded responses condemned *ilobolo* as a condition of slavery and as anathema to English conceptions of freedom, this opinion was not universally

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

shared by colonial administrators, settlers or missionaries. In the midst of the frequent discursive claims that *ilobolo* was not a ‘civilized’ custom, colonial officials nonetheless agreed to countenance its existence, having allowed it under customary law throughout the 1860s. Settler (and missionary) opinion as well was not unanimously against *ilobolo*. While ministering to his Zulu charges, Myron Pinkerton, a Natal missionary, groused that “some colonists told them it was well for fathers to get a dowry for their daughters at their marriage.”<sup>103</sup> Several farmers of large landholdings, when questioned by the Select Committee, expressed disappointment or disagreement with *ilobolo* and polygamy but asserted that the two practices provided the motivation necessary to persuade Zulu men to provide labor on white farms.<sup>104</sup> These dissenting opinions, however, further demonstrate the contradictory aims, goals, and orientations of Natal’s settler society. While a multiplicity of responses *did* exist, when questions of polygamy or *ilobolo* were phrased around the continued viability of the settler project to establish a neo-native white population at the expense of indigenous marginalization, larger consensus against these social practices coalesced in favor of elimination of the threatening practices.

### **The Law of 1869, Institutionalization, and Settler Backlash**

The difference between discursive and juridical building reached an apex in 1869, when the legislative actions of the settler state veered decidedly out of line with general discursive discussions fears surrounding polygamy and *ilobolo*. Despite having ‘quarantined’ the practice of polygamy and *ilobolo* to the realm of customary law, settlers continued to decry it as an aberrant and threatening social formation. General settler antipathy towards polygamy and *ilobolo* continued to simmer throughout the 1860s, only to experience a form of government co-optation

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<sup>103</sup> M W Pinkerton, “Ukulobolisa,” *Natal Magazine* 4, no. 14 (March 1879): 90–98.

<sup>104</sup> Natal (Colony), *Questions*.

following the passage of Law 1 of 1869, which significantly attempted to both alter some indigenous marital and social practices while retaining and strengthening others. The law was passed largely at the behest and upon the authority of Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's long running Secretary of Native Affairs. Feeling pressured between the increasingly strident demands of settlers who viewed native land 'reserves' as barriers to their prosperity while simultaneously resenting what they perceived as an uneven tax expenditure that benefitted indigenous peoples at their expense, and the task of maintaining native compliance with the veneer of authority Natalians claimed over the colony, Shepstone sought to cobble together a compromise measure in passing the marriage Law.<sup>105</sup> The latter half of the 1860s had not been an economically promising period for Natal; the colony was mired in an economic slump brought on by real estate over-speculation combined with catastrophic weather and a decline in British emigrants. Feeling the economic pinch, settlers turned even more strongly to their habitual grievances, seeing the native reserves in particular as frustrating checks on economic growth and decrying the significantly taxed indigenous population (who received very little return on those hut taxes from the colonial state) as too lightly taxed in comparison to their own fiscal burdens. To satisfy the rapacious demands of settlers, Shepstone increased a tax on indigenous marriages while resisting the marked increase in hut taxes they sought.<sup>106</sup> Law 1 of 1869 officially fixed the average 'price' of *ilobolo* at ten cattle for a non-noble bride and placed an additional £5 registration tax on any marriage carried out under Native law.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation*, 77–81.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas V. McClendon, *White Chief, Black Lords: Shepstone and the Colonial State in Natal, South Africa, 1845-1878* (University of Rochester Press, 2010), 85.

<sup>107</sup> Pinkerton, "Ukulobolisa," 90.

In so doing, Shepstone attempted to effect a complicated legal legerdemain: by offering marked increases on the taxes collected per marriage, Shepstone could claim to offset the rising cost of Natal's colonial maintenance whilst seeking to effect a gradually discourage polygamy amongst indigenous Africans.<sup>108</sup> Shepstone argued that the law would "favour the operation of natural causes to achieve the extinction of polygamy."<sup>109</sup> Secondly, the law would officially establish the 'correct' amount to be offered to a bride's family for *ilobolo*. By setting the number at a considerably high number (ten cattle), Shepstone could argue that his plan would induce African men to enter the wage economy on settler terms in order to obtain the cattle they needed to contract marriages. Finally, Law 1 offered a moral sop to missionaries and settlers alike—all marriages required the oral consent of the woman in question, consent that must be corroborated by a witness. Unsurprisingly, this compromise satisfied no one. In particular, it stirred up profound disgust on the side of settlers, who now equated Shepstone with amoral plotting for personal power at the expense of indigenous morality, the security of African women, and their own material interests.<sup>110</sup>

Following the passage of the marriage law, settler criticism of the continued existence of polygamy and *ilobolo* sharpened in Natal's periodicals, where settlers furthered what they perceived as the causal link between governmental failure and dangerously persistent indigenous immorality. "Government action is necessarily circumscribed in one way," admitted settler H.E. Stainbank in 1869. "It cannot Christianise the kafirs. But it can prepare them for the influence

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<sup>108</sup> McClendon, *White Chief, Black Lords*, 131.

<sup>109</sup> PAR, SNA 1/7/8 pp.18-23. T. Shepstone, "Memorandum: Registration of Native Marriages", 22 March 1869, cited in Sheik, "Colonial Rites," 116.

<sup>110</sup> One of the few supporters of Shepstone in this period was Bishop Colenso, who also advocated a somewhat unpopular position of limited tolerance for indigenous social customs. Guy, *The Heretic*.

of Christianity, or at all events remove many obstacles from the way.”<sup>111</sup> For Stainbank and other incensed letter writers, Natal’s government, while certainly not omnipotent when it came to controlling the lives and practices of indigenous peoples, was obviously remiss in enshrining polygamy and *ilobolo* in Native Law. Such an action resulted in no less than an implicit endorsement of a practice they deemed both nefarious and damaging to native society and more importantly to settler security. Stainbank argued specifically that polygamy and “its attendant female slavery” worked jointly in order to enact the oppression of African women:

Compare the case with that of other countries, and we shall find that the social treatment of the woman has a practical effect on the race, and that where polygamy is most rampant, there, surely, the race deteriorates. Here we have both in full swing, sanctioned by the laws—Polygamy and slavery.<sup>112</sup>

The rhetoric of deterioration played directly into settler scripts of the vanishing indigenous population. In this configuration, polygamy becomes shorthand for savagery that cannot continue to exist in the face of settler civilization. By linking polygamy and *ilobolo* to slavery, Stainbank repeats discourse that situated these indigenous formations as a moral challenge that necessitated the humanitarian occupation of white settlers.

Spurning the compromises in the 1869 marriage law, the editor of the popular Durban newspaper *The Natal Mercury* despaired that “these two things, Tribal Titles, involving large locations, and woman-slavery, inducing indolent habits in the men, have been, are now, and probably ever will be, the curse of this colony.” He went on to link the continued existence of this colonial curse squarely to a fault of Natal’s government, openly wondering

whether it was possible for the Government of Natal, consistently with its duty to the 'native' races, to have so influenced the minds of these children of nature, as to have made them regard their facilities for enriching themselves, by honest labour for the white man,

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<sup>111</sup> H. E. Stainbank, “The Native Question,” *The Natal Mercury*, March 4, 1869.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

as a privilege highly to be valued, instead of a burden to be ungraciously borne, or systematically avoided.<sup>113</sup>

The editorial cannily listed the central problem facing Natal as an economic one, brought upon by an inability to compel indigenous labor to meet the demands of settler capital. Yet key to this failure was the persistence of social formations like polygamy and *ilobolo* which did not line up with the economic needs and moral strictures of settlers. Consequently, settler rhetoric marked polygamy and *ilobolo* as emblematic of continued indigenous civilizational *failure* simultaneous with the failure of government to properly reproduce social propriety and economic prosperity through the manipulation of indigenous bodies and practices.

While decrying the continued practice of Zulu polygamy as the responsibility of the settler government, the editor went a step beyond, calling the persistence of these customs evidence of a failure of settler government to exert its necessary masculine, paternalistic power, leaving white women at risk of African male rapacity:

Can it be expected that a nation of young, hale, and full-blooded men, debarred by the *price* of females from entering upon married (?) life, and unwholesome dread of punishment, shall abstain from gratifying, at the expense of the race amongst whom they live, their licentious appetites? Again, we say, that nearly all the evils under which the colony at present groans are to be traced directly, or indirectly but none the less surely, to Kafir policy of the Government.<sup>114</sup>

In articulating the continued existence of polygamy as a direct failure of settler governance over African bodies, the editor turned that rhetoric onto perceived vulnerable populations within the settler polity. In this formulation it white women were now at risk of themselves being victims of black male violence due to the failure of white settler men to utilize legal regimes of power to control black male bodies.

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<sup>113</sup> “Editorial (March 23, 1869),” *The Natal Mercury*, March 23, 1869.

<sup>114</sup> “Editorial (February 18, 1869).”

Ultimately, as part of a series of hasty compromises surrounding revenue, government authority and indigenous autonomy, Law 1 of 1869 officially enshrined the legal status of polygamy and *ilobolo* as a part of Native Law. While the law did enact a cordon sanitaire of sorts as a means of ‘protecting’ settlers from the perceived contamination to their institutions and way of life, it did *not* eliminate the nonnormative practice as many settlers had hoped. The angry tirades of 1869 demonstrate a divide between the discourses of settler instability created by polygamy and *ilobolo* and the legal responses to these discourses offered by settler legislators and the imperial government officials that claimed to represent them in the name of civilization and good order. In particular, Shepstone was deeply savaged by a colonial press who felt he had made a Faustian bargain, perpetuating the moral quandary of enslavement in order to continue to enact indigenous governmentality on the cheap. The resultant divide between these two groups would have profound implications for Natal history—an isolated Shepstone turned to increasingly autocratic measures to shore up his authority in the 1870s. This resulted not in a coherent and insidious ‘Shepstonian system’ of native management, as argued by David Welsh and Mahmood Mamdani. Rather, Shepstone’s attempts to maintain power as an indigenous interlocutor and imperial administrator without settler support resulted in an ad hoc *realpolitik* that relied far more heavily on the stick than the carrot for his African subjects. The resultant post-1869 authoritarian approach by Shepstone is visible most clearly in the harassment and pursuit of Langalibalele in 1873, the ostentatious coronation of Cetshwayo that same year, and the disastrous land concessions to the Transvaal that eventually sparked the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.<sup>115</sup> While the passage of 1869’s marriage law may have initially secured an imagined

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<sup>115</sup> While David Welsh and Mahmood Mamdani argue more for an interlocking ‘Shepstone system’ that set a model for later segregations throughout the continent, the ad hoc nature of his thirty year policies remain a more convincing analysis. See Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation*; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*:

colonial hegemony in the Shepstonian mold where ‘immoral’ practices were banished to native legal codes away from whites, the decision would have profound ramifications in the decades to come. Law 1 demonstrated a division between settler discourses, in which indigenous social formations were mapped along raced and gendered lines as threats to colonial authority, and the juridical responses of the colonial state, which operated within and responded to those very discourses. Law 1, then, demonstrated an extension of legislative maneuvers to quarantine indigenous formations in legal and physical reserves, a move which clashed with the original discourses that gave rise to these juridical choices. While settler discourses sought a full removal of polygamy and *ilobolo*, the resultant tools of the state established a formal division between indigenous and European legal practice. Yet European marital formations continued to be somewhat suspect themselves, as late nineteenth-century debates suggest.

### **Shoring up Settler Respectability: The Specter of Sororate Marriages in Natal**

The constant debates over the continued ‘problem’ of indigenous polygamy and *ilobolo* in the colonial record underscore the co-constitutive nature of race and gender construction in Natal. As settlers decried the demoralizing and barbaric practices of polygamy and *ilobolo* ostensibly in comparison with their own, they worked to shore up their own matrimonial and social formations in contradistinction to the indigenous peoples that surrounded them. Despite separating colonial ‘civil law’ from Native Law, creating a legal reserve that simultaneously preserved indigenous social customs and yet quarantined them, lest they negatively impact white society, Natal’s settler community had their own matrimonial irregularities that needed policing.

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*Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); For more on Shepstone’s theatrical displays of authority, see Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Harvard University Press, 1998); McClendon, *White Chief, Black Lords*.

Natal's settler government set up civil laws on marriage that resembled the Cape and other colonies throughout the empire with its incorporation as a British colony in the early 1840s. However, a significant number of early settler/traders, including the later administrator Henry Francis Fynn, engaged in polygamous relationships with local Nguni women prior to the colony's formal establishment. These men later attempted to 'straighten' their aberrant marital relationships in order to improve their standing in the new colony; after leaving their African wives, these men married suitable white women upon the increased arrival of the latter in the 1850s. Yet another simultaneous crisis loomed for the settlers who wished to construct their sense of civic inclusion in Natal along raced and gendered lines: that of sororate marriage, the union of a widowed husband and his late wife's sister.

The question of sororate marriage in Natal echoed larger concerns about proper forms of marriage throughout the British Empire, as legislators in the Australian colonies and in the metropole itself debated the legality of such a measure throughout the nineteenth century. Yet in Natal, the day to day realities of settlement amid a larger indigenous population significantly colored the dimensions of the marital discussions. As historian Nafisa Essop Sheik has asserted, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill (later the Colonial Marriages Act) became a central preoccupation for colonial legislators and newspaper writers throughout the final quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> Sororate marriage ran counter to the religious underpinnings of English civil marriage, falling within the prohibited degrees of affinity of the Anglican Church. Yet the minority of British settlers in Natal that found themselves in this awkward familial configuration discovered they had very few options for remedying their irregular matrimonial condition, as Sheik's research attests.

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<sup>116</sup> Sheik, "Colonial Rites," 75–78.

Until the law's passing in 1897 (ten years before the British Parliament followed suit), clergy, legislators, and colonial officials contested the legitimacy of absorbing such a seemingly unorthodox practice into civil law. Civil law was, after all, held up as a defining means of difference that provided the critical civilizational marker that applied to all whites in Natal and only a minimal number of exempted Africans. The 'crisis' generated by the discussions over the bill demonstrated the frequently co-constitutive nature of gendered and raced norms in colonial Natal. Pre-existing, indigenous practices like polygamy, *ilobolo*, and *ukungena* (levirate marriage, or the marrying of a widow with her deceased husband's brother) could be consigned to the world of tribalized Native Law, while settler practices needed to be seen as sophisticated, set apart, and advanced. Ultimately, the nineteenth century conversations that took place over sororate marriage for white settlers revealed the anxieties present over determining appropriate raced and gendered behavior in a colony that depended upon markers of difference between citizen and subject. "Society is not eager for such marriages," admitted an editorial in the *Natal Witness* in 1877, while still asserting that "every man moving in society knows that public opinion is by no means opposed to marriages with a deceased wife's sister. No woman loses caste by entering into such a marriage."<sup>117</sup> While acknowledging the heterodox nature of such marriages in British society, the *Natal Witness* writer argued tellingly that those who contracted such marriage would not suffer in settler estimation and, even more tellingly, would not 'lose caste.' The acknowledgment of racial *castes* clearly references the still unspoken presence of the Indian (and also African) 'other' whose labor and marked difference underpinned the very nature of the settler project in Natal.

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<sup>117</sup> "Editorial," *The Natal Witness*, July 17, 1877.

Thus, the cries of moral collapse or decline that echoed throughout nineteenth century settler consternation over indigenous moral decay sound somewhat different when contrasted with the realities of internal anxiety that surround the aberrance of their own marital practice. Sheik brilliantly and incisively argues that in securing the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill, a "deceit of civil law was made a conceit of colonial respectability."<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the editorial reinforces the gendered and raced dynamics of marriage controversies in the colony by emphasizing the ability for white men to travel through colonial spaces unimpeded and for white women to remain in place in settler society. Ultimately, this less than orthodox iteration of settler marriage needed to be defended in pursuit of the future of settlement—namely encouraging the stability and legal legibility of white children in Natal.

The shoring up, so to speak, of settler matrimonial respectability remains an integral part of the story of the raced and gendered logics of settlement in Natal. Certainly, the white marital 'crises' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century contributed to the larger construction of proper (white) civic inclusion within the colony. As Sheik argues, "the creation of a fledgling settler colonial space with a large majority of indigenous subjects provided new opportunities for the achievement of respectability under difficult circumstances of familial and class re-making."<sup>119</sup> For Sheik, the colonial world of Natal offered British men and women the opportunity for social mobility through the establishment of other, lesser classes through racialized labor (namely Africans as well as Indian migrants). Yet, I differ with Sheik in understanding the manner in which gender, labor, and marriage customs of Natal's different people groups came to be implicated in colonial regulation. While I focus in this chapter

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<sup>118</sup> Sheik, "Colonial Rites," 105.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 104–105.

specifically on indigenous/settler interactions, I maintain that the emergent and co-constitutive heteronormative order that emerged in late nineteenth century Natal rested upon a foundation of racialized remaking at a familial and reproductive level. For white men and women in Natal to claim a social mobility in and through the occupied spaces of the colony they needed to police both labor and matrimonial systems in order secure their own settler futurity, embodied in the next generation they hoped to secure. Indeed, the *Witness* article continued to argue in favor of the passage of the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Bill, stating that the law would eliminate the “singular ingenuity of injustice [that] makes the children suffer for what is regarded as no fault on the part of the parents.”<sup>120</sup> Such an argument takes its force from a deep vault of reproductive futurity that the settler state was in the process of attempting to establish. The work of maintaining a colonial society in occupied land while greatly outnumbered by an indigenous population produced a profound anxiety, visible in settler writing, surrounding the viability of such a project. As a result, the figure of the settler child, the material manifestation of the desire for social reproduction in a contested space, developed a particularly powerful valence within Natal's colonial discourses.

As settler legislators worked to increase the racial stratifications that underpinned the political, economic, and social realities of the colony, the white settler child increasingly came to be invoked in newspapers and speeches as a means of ensuring a real future in the face of overbearing numbers of indigenous and Indian ‘competitors.’ “Observer,” a settler writing to the *Witness* in 1878, revisited the sororate marriage debate, arguing that it was unimportant “whether a man marries his wife's sister or not, but what we want is that the bachelors of the Colony should marry someone.” Observer continued, arguing that marriages, sororate or more

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<sup>120</sup> “Editorial.”

traditional, between European colonists should be encouraged by the Government with a grant of 1,000 acres of Natal land:

This would tend to free our towns of many a worthless spendthrift, and be a means at least of encouraging them to till the land and become useful members of society. What is the use of our Crown lands to us if they are reserved as a breeding warren for Kafirs? Down with polygamy, which is nothing else than slavery! A man takes as many wives as he thinks proper; the woman is bought for a price, and if she should neglect or refuse to work, the purchaser applies the rod.<sup>121</sup>

In this passage, the stakes of settler respectability are revealed anew. Observer directly links the debate over sororate marriage to larger concerns about settler reproduction. Allowing the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill to become law ostensibly legitimates the matrimonial practices of settlers, who are conceiving their on relationships in direct relation to indigenous Africans as well as Indian migrants. The act of broadening the social acceptability of settler matrimonial practice by assimilating it into pre-existing civil law allowed settlers to continue to claim moral distinction and superiority over Africans who operated initially as subjects of separate, inferior Native Law.

In addition, sororate marriage could increase the number of legitimate, state-recognized marital formations that could potentially produce more white settlers who could fill the land and legitimate their occupation of the colony. As the first *Witness* letter makes clear, the justification for such marriages could therefore be predicated upon a mission to 'protect' the white settler child and therefore the security of the settler project, which depended on constant repetition of norms as well as the constant re-creation of entitled populations. Yet as Observer's letter indicates, the sacralization of the white settler child (and with it the imagined security of a reproductive colonial futurism in Natal) depended upon the simultaneous construction of the

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<sup>121</sup> Observer, "Matrimonial," *The Natal Witness*, July 24, 1877.

indigenous matrimonial formations (and resultant children) as aberrant, anti-normative, and in a manner of speaking, *queer*.<sup>122</sup> Thus, in the minds of settlers, the legal sanction of sororate marriage would further the establishment of colonial legitimacy over bodies deemed non-normative and supersede the threatening claims of indigenous peoples to the land that settlers desired. These late nineteenth century debates concerning white sororate marriage offer moments where settler articulations of distinctiveness and respectability vis-à-vis an indigenous population whose labor and claims to the land colonists seek to acquire can be directly observed. These articulations, in turn, are made possible through a co-constitutive creation of a heteronormative settler social order in Natal that maintains that indigenous social formations like polygamy and *ilobolo* are inherently destabilizing and non-normative and must be sacrificed in order to secure the economic, political, and social hegemony envisioned for the yet-unborn colonial generations to come.

### **Voices of Authenticity: Zulu Voices in Natal's Polygamy Debates**

In the cacophony of voices, actions, and motivations, missionaries sought to harmonize Zulu opinion on *isithembu* and *ilobolo* with their own, attempting to create a consensus among the *amakholwa*, or newly converted. In 1863, Ira Adams, a missionary at the Amazimtoti mission station, addressed the *amakholwa* in *Ikwezi*, the station's Zulu language newspaper, seeking to create an indigenous, internal response to a Zulu social formation:

U kona o wa ti, ku bonisa utando lokutanda umfazi. Mina ngi ya pika, ngi ti a ku njalo, uma ku njalo, ku ya ngani ukuti uma intombazana I tanda umuntu o nge nayo inkomo, kwaliwe, ku tiwe si funa ukudhla tina, a ti noma ku yindoda I tanda intombazana, kwaliwe ngokuba I nge nazo izinkomo, noma I se I yile kuye, ku fike omunye nje o nezinkomo, ku vunywe yena noma inga m

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<sup>122</sup> Edelman, *No Future*, 28. This is not to argue that Nguni speaking peoples saw themselves as queer; rather, that settlers sought to render them as discursively so for their own purposes; indigenous peoples saw their own formations as relatively normative and often made recourse to their own normative claims to challenge settlers.

tandi intombazana. Futi ni pikellani ukuti intengo? Make ni tyo a ku mangalwa na ngako? Futi e file a zi kitywa na? uma kungeko omunye umtwana wokukok o fileyo na? ku pi ukumtanda kwake na? Uma wa be m tanda, nga ye enga ku buli into pela e ya be I bonisa utando njalo.

[You have heard it said, that *ukulobola* shows a man's love for a woman. I disagree, I say that it is not so; when a woman loves a man but he does not have cattle, the family will refuse him, saying that they want to eat, or if a man loves a woman but does not have cattle, they will refuse, but if a man comes with cattle they will let him have the woman even if she does not love him. Why do you disagree that this is a form of trade? Are you all still not surprised? If the one you play *ilobolo* for dies, is that a misfortune? Or will you acquire another wife to replace the one who has died? If he loved her, where is the proof shown of that love?]<sup>123</sup>

Adams repeats the common assertion by missionaries that *ilobolo* was a simple market exchange of women to the detriment of all involved, but his argument goes further here. By phrasing his work in Zulu and making appeals to notions of love, value, and affection, Adams seeks to indigenize Western conceptions of social relationships while rendering them as natural and intrinsic to Zulu culture. In short, Adams attempts to naturalize his willful separation of Zulu social obligations from expressions of affection; by presenting extreme examples of *ilobolo* as distinct from 'love' and arguing in a Zulu idiom, Adams works to erase his 'outsider' status in critiquing Zulu gendered social conventions. Indeed, Adams furthers his point by appealing to "the ways of the elders ... they would have stopped such a thing, saying that *ilobolo* appears to be that shameful trade in a person."<sup>124</sup> The *Ikwezi* article in effect argues that *ilobolo* works to perpetuate an enslaving/dehumanizing logic of commodification that exists apart from affection, and subsequently elides the externality of this assertion by rendering it in Zulu idiom as an *internal* assessment rather than a form of religious re-orientation.

Adams was not the only missionary to attempt to harmonize Zulu voices in order to create a sense of 'order' in the debates surrounding *ilobolo*. Pinkerton argued in 1879 that

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<sup>123</sup> I N Adams, "Ngokulobolisa," *Ikwezi*, February 1864. I am grateful to Mwelele Cele for his patience with my faltering translations of 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. "Yitini imvelo yawo baba, ku nqala uku yi yeka into yakiti ukuti loku ukulobolisa ku vela ngamahloni, okuti intengo umuntu."

“Native Christians, on some older and larger stations, gave me great help by urging my people to stand by me and keep Ukulobolisa out of the Church.”<sup>125</sup> In addition, Pinkerton based part of his resistance to *ilobolo* in part on his understanding of the Zulu language terms for the practice:

“Ukulobolisa is, by the natives, very often unmistakably called a sale. The word ukuthengisa is very generally used instead of ukulobolisa, and ukuthenga instead of ukulobola, in speaking of this exchange of women for commodities... The truth appears to be that ukuthenga is a generic word, meaning to purchase for a price, while ukulobolisa is a specific word meaning to purchase a wife for cattle. The easy, economic and social usages which modified the transaction when the Kafirs had no money, and no commercial relations with the world abroad, have now given place to the severe standards of cash, and the hard laws which govern commercial transactions; so that, now the generic word best applies. In accordance with this view, after full discussion, the native preachers and pastors of the American Mission, in June 1876, declared that under the English rule, ukulobolisa has become strictly a sale, and that it ought to be abolished.”<sup>126</sup>

By positing himself as the interlocutor between Zulu language and English reader, Pinkerton sought to harmonize discordant voices in the debate over *ilobolo*. As a result, Pinkerton could claim to paternalistically speak *for* Zulu speakers by using their own words as his own. Thus, like Adams, Pinkerton attempted to ‘naturalize’ external critiques of indigenous practice as originating within Zulu cultural frameworks and erasing his own position as an observer.

Yet despite these efforts to create a sense of indigenous agreement, Zulu people seemed far more ambivalent regarding *ilobolo* and *isithembu* than settlers wished to admit. Zulu women “do not, as a whole, condemn polygamy, or wish it done away from among them,” missionary Aldin Grout reluctantly conceded. “The evils resulting from it they would call excrescences, and if those were palliated the whole thing would be *tolerable*.”<sup>127</sup> Zulu men and women consistently demonstrated their own autonomy in deciding whether or not they approved of or supported *ilobolo* and *isithembu*. In addition to the persistent Zulu women that Grout encountered, other *amakholwa* indicated their acceptance or rejection of the social practices apart from European

<sup>125</sup> Pinkerton, “Ukulobolisa.”

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Natal Evangelical Alliance (Durban Sub-Division), *Polygamy and Woman-Slavery in Natal*, 14. Emphasis original.

consensus. Two *kholwa* catechists trained by the controversial Anglican bishop John Colenso frustrated European attempts to render *isithembu* as a resolutely anti-Christian practice. Missionary Josiah Tyler evinced bitter disappointment that William Ngidi, “the bishop’s interpreter and principal preacher, laid aside all his civilized clothing, married four wives, and is now living in a kraal to all appearance a besotted heathen.” When Tyler attempted to reassert a religious and moral sense of order by “reminding him of his accountability to God,” Ngidi “replied, with a derisive laugh, ‘I was taught otherwise.’”<sup>128</sup> Ngidi’s response demonstrates one form of Zulu resistance to complicity in missionary efforts to indigenize external critiques of *ilobolo* and polygamy. Despite Tyler’s insistence that Ngidi had ‘regressed,’ Ngidi was able to marshal his own relationship to Colenso and his own patriarchal position as the head of an *umuzi* to counter Tyler’s claims.

Likewise, Magma Fuze, *kholwa* intellectual and author of the first Zulu novel, asserted his own independent understanding of *isithembu*’s relationship to Christianity and ‘civilization.’ Magistrate James Stuart noted that Fuze, “considers it is not in conflict with Christianity to have more than [one] wife; that one may be a good Christian and yet have more wives than one.”<sup>129</sup> Writing in 1891, after larger numbers of Zulus had become to convert to Christianity, and amid increased questioning of the propriety of *ilobolo* for *amakholwa*, Fuze wrote to his fellow countrymen, saying:

ukulobola kambe ngumkuba nje wobuhlobo owemiswa kuqala yilabo abangapambili. Uma bekungalotsholwanga kambe, izwe lakithi ngalikade lapenduka onondindwa. [*Ilobolo*, of course, is first and foremost about joining two families together. If *ilobolo* had not been paid, our nation would long ago have become wanderers.]<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Tyler, *Forty Years among the Zulus*, 129.

<sup>129</sup> James Stuart Collection, vol. 27 (c. 1898) “Zulu Contact with the Civilized Races”, p. 9.

<sup>130</sup> Magma Fuze (Magwaza), “Ku Mhleli We Nkanyiso,” *Inkanyiso Yase Natal*, January 17, 1891.

Fuze's statement is significant here; he rejects arguments propagated by missionaries, settlers, and later by *amakholwa* that assert that *ilobolo* perpetuates slavery. Rather, he seeks to articulate *ilobolo* within a relevant and useful cultural tradition, asserting Zulu autonomy in a social formation that challenged settler claims. However, his articulations are not without their own provocative claims to masculinist authority; specifically, Fuze asserts that without *ilobolo* the Zulu nation would have become *onondindwa*. While this literally means "wanderers," the term itself is applied almost singularly for female prostitutes, who were deemed women who 'inappropriately' wandered about without appropriate sanction. Fuze's writing points to a particularly thorny issue within indigenous articulations of tradition in the face of settler biopolitical controls: frequently they could be coupled with patriarchal appeals that advanced male autonomy at the expense of women's movement. Fuze and Ngidi resisted efforts to be complicit in missionary efforts to indigenize external critiques of *ilobolo* and *isithembu*. These acts of resistance and autonomy demonstrate the clashing and contradictory motivations and conversations that surrounded Zulu custom as settler society tried to impose its will over indigenous lands and bodies.

### **Assessing the Quarantine: Patriarchy, Legality, and the 1881 Natal Commission**

In 1881, Natal's Legislative Council sought to assess the effectiveness of government intervention in Zulu polygamy, more than a decade after ensuring the establishment polygamy as a fundamental part of 'native law,' an act that simultaneously enshrined its practice in legal form while attempting to quarantine the practice from potentially challenging settler society. The 1881 Commission offers a particularly important glimpse into the change in governmental practice in the decade following the controversial Law 1 of 1869. While settler voices continue to demonstrate disapproval with the existence of polygamy and *ilobolo*, the rhetoric focused less on

the threat that these formations offered to settler norms, and more on the idea of ostensibly reforming Zulu society. The Commission made apparent that despite the initial vitriol raised in the wake of Law 1, a decade later most white observers considered the division between ‘native law’ and English civil law to have offered an effective social and discursive barrier between indigenous social practices and settler society. Despite the considerable settler backlash to the 1869 law, after a decade of wars and upheaval, public opinion seemed to have shifted. The 1881 Commission revealed a new settler consensus that coalesced around the idea that polygamy and *ilobolo* no longer posed a threat to settler identity per se, but that indigenous Africans still required transformation and uplift through white civilizational contact.

While the 1881 Commission demonstrated a marked decline in settler fears of contamination from indigenous practices, this does not mean that Natal’s Legislative Council was supportive of the continued existence of such practices. Indeed, many of the questions asked by the 1881 Commission still concerned the possibility of eliminating *ilobolo* outright. However, one particular fear settler legislators frequently repeated concerned the possibility of indigenous women losing their sense of value as a result of the removal of the practice; frequent mentions both oblique and explicit, were made concerning the virtue of such ‘devalued’ women. While interviewing James Allsopp, the missionary leader of the African Christian settlement at Edendale, the commissioners asked openly if “the abolition of *ukulobola* would tend to prostitution amongst Native girls from the less sense of value which may seem to be involved in the practice.”<sup>131</sup> Allsopp, perhaps predictably, asserted that “because the girls are beginning to see that they are not mere chattels, and they object to being sold,” that *ilobolo* on the mission

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<sup>131</sup> Natal (Colony), *Report of the Natal Native Commission, 1881-2* (Pietermaritzburg: Vause, Slatter & Co, 1882), 20–33.

stations, particularly Edendale, was dying out rapidly, particularly as the town's residents were interested primarily in 'living like Englishmen.'<sup>132</sup>

However, this opinion was not shared by other self-acknowledged experts on indigenous custom. Theophilus Shepstone, the then-retired Secretary of Native Affairs, and his brother John W. Shepstone (who now held the position) both asserted that eliminating *ilobolo* rapidly would result in immediate social instability that would lead to increased sexual immorality among Zulu women. J.W. Shepstone took pains to assert *ilobolo*'s capacity as a moral system deeply structured in family hierarchies, nothing that "at present the girls are looked after and narrowly watched; the parents have a decided object in looking after their morals. I consider that at present it is the best of two evils."<sup>133</sup> While it is perhaps unsurprising that the Shepstone brothers offered an impassioned defense of the system they had helped to create in its present legal form, it is worth noting in particular the basis by which they claimed the structural morality of *ilobolo*. Ultimately, the Shepstones offered an administrative assessment of *ilobolo*, describing it as a social mechanism that drew from contemporary patriarchal systems in order to enact controls over the body of African women. Such an articulation echoes both Jeff Guy and Benedict Carton's arguments that the settler colonial state (or at least its official functionaries) sought to maintain order through an investment in collaborative, patriarchal male authority between the state and African men while capitalizing on the claims of older generations of African families to dictate the choices of the younger.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. For more on Edendale, see Chapter 4.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 90–110.

<sup>134</sup> Guy, "An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal"; Carton, *Blood from Your Children*. However, this remains a far from uncontested assertion. The sharpest criticism of the patriarchal alliance theory comes from Teresa Barnes' study of African

Unlike the 1852-3 Commission, the 1881 Commission included several indigenous African voices, translated and saved in the official record, although like the previous commission, all respondents were male. The questions asked of African men showed a consistent preoccupation of Natal's settler government with securing control over the bodies of indigenous women for the sake of preserving morality. Ultimately, the questions posited reveal that in the wake of ostensibly 'quarantining' polygamy and *ilobolo*, Natal's settler government then sought to measure and contain the effects of indigenous social practices by means of patriarchal alliance-building with Zulu men. The Zulu men surveyed provided an array of responses to the particularly leading questions offered by settler observers. While some Christian Zulu respondents were quick to assert that *ilobolo* was practiced and desired by those living 'in darkness,' others seemed to indicate a large scale interest in the continuation of the custom, urged on by both Zulu men and women. Two of the respondents, Jacobus Matiwane and John Kumalo, vehemently asserted that *ilobolo* was both inappropriate and dehumanizing, while William Ngidi, Magera Fuze, and Nambula all asserted that the practice was both significant and value-laden still for Zulu men and women.<sup>135</sup> As Nambula announced before the Commission, *ilobolo* "creates relationship" between a husband, wife, and their respective families, challenging the idea of the practice as merely enslavement or barbarism.<sup>136</sup>

The continued stability of Africans as both a labor force and a subject population within Natal became a noted point of investigation by the Commission, which feared a larger social disturbance resulting from any hasty government action to quash polygamy or *ilobolo*. The male

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women in colonial Zimbabwe. Barnes argues that the alliance theory is too simplistic and overinscribes patriarchy as a defining factor in African men's decisions, while negating the persuasive and collective power of women.

Barnes, *We Women Worked So Hard*.

<sup>135</sup> Natal (Colony), *Report of the Natal Native Commission, 1881-2*, 144–190.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

Zulu informants on record offered differing suggestions for the resolution of the ‘social questions’ created by the continuance of practices like polygamy and *ilobolo*. Some men urged for the practices to be eliminated immediately on the grounds of Christianization and civilizational uplift for their people, while others argued for the practices in terms of preserving the value of women within the larger society. As William Ngidi lamented before the Commission, the abolition of *ilobolo* would make Zulu women “prostitutes and wanderers.”<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Umnini, Chief of the Amafala, testified before the Commission that the marital regulations of Law 1 of 1869 had eroded patriarchal controls through an emphasis on female consent to the marriage. While the law had enshrined *ilobolo* and polygamy as legitimately protected and recognized institutions, they had also been altered through legal codification—both consent and divorce standardization by the settler state had directly impacted these practices. “I may pay *ukulobola* for a girl, and bring her home, and may have reason to complain of her conduct,” asserted Umnini. “If I speak to her she says ‘Dare you say this to me,’ and goes and gets a divorce. She may commit adultery with my own sons at the kraal... It is the bad women who get divorces.”<sup>138</sup> For Umnini, the marital reform enacted by Law 1 of 1869 had undermined patriarchal control over women’s bodies; in his estimation women were no longer subject to male discipline or confrontation because they now had recourse to divorce. The testimony of men like Ngidi and Umnini demonstrate a gendered response to the colonial fact-gathering of the 1881 Commission. Rather than accept the benefits of the 1869 Law as a safeguard and quarantine as settlers did, the Zulu observers described the law either in terms of a loss or a threatened loss of male patriarchal control; while *ilobolo* and polygamy were to be continued as

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 161. This reference, almost certainly is directly translated from the Zulu word “onindindwa,” meaning ‘prostitute,’ but literally ‘one who wanders.’ See the later section for more on Ngidi and Fuze’s views on ‘women wanderers.’

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 191.

indigenous traditions, multiple male informants challenged the celebration of legal quarantine that characterized much of the settler response.

Ultimately, the 1881 Commission reflected the changes in settler approaches to polygamy and *ilobolo*. While the practices still drew disdain from settler observers, who continued to use them as a means of differentiating indigenous ‘barbarism’ with settler ‘civilization,’ the crystallizing of these practices in legal form had the effect of redirecting settler energies away from fears of contamination and more towards a reform of a ‘foreign’ population. The pages of the Commission reveal an attempt by the Natal government to obtain male patriarchal cooperation in pursuit of a form of colonial hegemony. Yet indigenous men challenged and potentially reshaped the conversations away from settler desires for ‘reform’ and more towards the everyday social relations in which they lived. Thus, the 1881 Commission remains important as it demonstrates not just a shift in settler attitudes but an increasing rapprochement with and reliance upon the separate Native Law system championed by men like Theophilus Shepstone.

## **Conclusion**

As British settlers sought to establish themselves as the new natives of a colonial landscape they wished to render familiar and accessible, they simultaneously asserted claims over indigenous peoples and their lands by attacking social formations like *isithembu* and *ilobolo*. Settlement, as a fragile, constitutive project, required the sublimation of indigenous social and sexual formations. In particular, colonial officials, missionaries, and settlers viewed the practices of polygamy and *ilobolo* as destabilizing because they threatened the supremacy and economic plans of white settlers. Settler discourses throughout the 1850s and 1860s focused primarily on the idea of eliminating the threatening formation from the colony for good.

As settlers and indigenous peoples continued to interact, the figure of the Zulu woman as singularly oppressed and the African man as despotically brutish produced gendered and raced realities in the colony. The settler state attempted to respond to these discursive truths through juridical maneuvers, mainly through the quarantining of polygamy and *ilobolo* into legal and physical reservations. Yet the ultimate extension of this quarantine, the establishment of Law 1 of 1869, alienated settlers, who felt that the juridical solutions differed dramatically with the discursive world from which these legal maneuvers had emerged. Yet these quarantines did not provide hegemonic security for Natal's settlers. Beset by their own gendered and raced concerns, the settler state attempted to offer juridical responses for white society as well in response to the discourses of polygamy, *ilobolo*, and savagery. The shoring up of sororate marriage demonstrates the vulnerability of white settler formations despite the legal quarantine of Native Law. By the 1880s, after a decade of warfare, instability, and sororate squabbles, Natal's settler population still disdained polygamy and *ilobolo*, but had become increasingly invested in a Shepstone-initiated system of quarantine. Yet the few indigenous voices that appear in archival sources—from the 1881 Commission to indignant missionary reports—demonstrated that African men and women remained autonomous actors in these clashes between discursive and juridical truth building. The continued existence of polygamy and *ilobolo* by the end of the colonial period demonstrates not merely the resilience of indigenous formations, but at the failure of settlers at attaining the discursive worlds that they created. The questions of indigenous polygamy and *ilobolo*, then, provide a critical lens through which we can view questions of settler colonialism, gender, and race not only in Natal, but in the wider imperial world.

### Chapter Three: Sobriety and Settlement: the Racialized Politics of Alcohol and Cannabis

#### Use in Natal, 1856-1897

Intoxication threatened the political, social, and economic order of Natal in which settlers, colonial administrators were heavily invested. This is not to imply that settlers or the colonial state were monolithic entities, or that they were all powerful. On the contrary, the colonial state in Natal was relatively weak in its early years, and the ambitions of settlers far outstripped anything that they could actually realize, particularly in trying to control the indigenous African populations that vastly outnumbered them. Reading colonial records for discussions of alcohol and cannabis allows us to see the material conditions of labor and civic inclusion that the state was invested in producing—as well as sites of potential Indian and African resistance. A combination of settlers, colonial officials, missionaries, and a minority of African and Indian peoples themselves sought to ban indigenous and Indian drinking—making alcohol, in effect, a monopoly for white settlers. In addition, Natal legislators and settler authors sought to mark cannabis smoking as an anti-social and dangerous practice indulged in *only* Indians and Africans.

As with polygamy and *ilobolo*, responses to alcohol and cannabis use in nineteenth century Natal reveal that categories of race and gender were not fully formed in this period. Rather, these identities were contingent, created through the collisions of differing peoples in the colony and structured through juridical attempts at control and interpretation. These legal efforts reached their peak in 1890, when Natal's Legislative Council debated both the Definition of Natives Bill and the 1890 Liquor Law, which sought to not only further entrench legal restrictions to alcohol access, but also to define just who existed within these restricted people

groups. If the 1890 Liquor Law became the immediate framework for racial distinction, firmly limiting access to liquor in accordance to hierarchies of inclusion within the colonial state, then the Definition of Natives Bill represented the sorting mechanism by which a ruling white settler minority sought to assign whites, Africans, and Indians proper roles within Natal. This chapter, then, examines how discourses within settler society surrounding alcohol and cannabis use interacted with a developing legal administration in the colony, in the process granting power to racial hierarchies within Natal. These legal entrenchments of discursive patterns reveal the limits of settlement in Natal; namely, the failure of white settlers to create and maintain what they viewed as respectable order among themselves and over the colony's peoples more broadly.

Beginning in 1856, Natal's Legislative Council constantly attempted to control African (and later Indian) drinking throughout the century, to little success. Natal also became one of the first constituent parts of the British Empire to pass prohibitive (albeit largely ineffective) legislation banning the recreational consumption of cannabis during the nineteenth century, a common pastime for many African and Indian laborers. Why was this the case? What did alcohol (and later cannabis) have to do with racial politics of empire? Alcohol—and the sociability it offered—signified both inclusion and legitimacy within the confines of white settler society in Natal. The specter of the drunken African haunted the imagination of Natal's settlers, demonstrating both a lack of white control over indigenous bodies as well as the threat of over-familiarity with privileges that Europeans believed they alone possessed. However, the European inebriate also threatened the security of the settler regime. The idea that white men, whose very claims to a monopoly on drinking were predicated on their supposed moral superiority in the face of intoxicants, could also fall prey to drunkenness threatened the racial hierarchies that supported Natal society. As a consequence, legislators, missionaries, and colonial officials

worked to draw wide boundaries around the socially inappropriate behavior of drunkenness, in order to uphold the racialized logics of settlement that underpinned the colony.

Alcohol, as well as questions around its rightful consumption, access, and attendant sociability, provides a concrete means of understanding the limits of inclusion within the settler polity of Natal. Settler legislators, newspaper writers, missionaries, Zulu converts, Indian migrants, and British officials all maintained very differing views on matters of alcohol consumption within Natal, yet moments of rough consensus arose around a variety of topics in the late nineteenth century. It is through these moments of coalescence that we are able to listen past the competing crowds of voices in order to discern the contours of settlement in Natal. By privileging moments of temporary alliance between groups, we can understand the ways in which alcohol—as a very real commodity as well as a discursive subject—mapped onto the larger goals of white settler colonists in Natal and how others sought to resist, change, or modify these assertions. Ultimately, debates over alcohol consumption and policy reveal the day-to-day realities of settler colonialism. British settlers attempted to create a racialized space in nineteenth century Natal, a colony where only white inhabitants possessed full claims to citizenship and inclusion. Banning indigenous consumption of alcohol accomplished multiple goals simultaneously: it justified settler claims to be caretakers of a land rightly taken from morally inferior indigenes, it specifically marked indigenous populations as incapable of participating in forms of sociability as defined by colonists, and it worked to discourage activities that would lessen the reliability and productivity of labor upon which colonists depended. Alcohol consumption served to demarcate for settlers the limits between acceptable sociability in a society they hoped to dominate and in the process, to create and consolidate social respectability along racial lines.

While a significant amount of literature exists on alcohol production and consumption in twentieth century South Africa, comparatively little has been written about alcohol use in nineteenth century Natal.<sup>139</sup> Much has been written, however, by southern African scholars on the contested meanings, symbols, and opportunities presented in alcohol consumption in the twentieth century.<sup>140</sup> In particular, Paul La Hausse's study of the 'Durban system' of municipal beerhalls remains a compelling and critical reading of state ambition, African resistance, and the politics of colonial labor. Anne Mager's work on masculinity and sociability in apartheid-era South Africa highlights the competing attractions, meanings, and benefits alcohol consumption held for African workers, white South African students, and shebeen owners, among others. Mager and La Hausse both assert that alcohol acted as more than a mere commodity over which settlers frequently attempted to reserve a monopoly on both distribution and consumption; rather, alcohol became a particular cogent site of contestation between colonial state, African workers, and the labor regimes that enmeshed them both. Likewise, comparatively little has been written on the history of cannabis production and use in nineteenth century Natal; scholars have focused primarily on the role of *dagga* as a means of resistance to state control during the apartheid era.<sup>141</sup> When either alcohol or cannabis have featured in nineteenth century histories of Natal,

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<sup>139</sup> The only major work covering nineteenth century alcohol consumption in Natal is Leigh Anderson's PhD thesis, which focuses more on criminality and the attempts of the colonial state to manage perceived anti-social activity. While useful, Anderson's work offers more of a list of crimes and crime reports than a systematic analysis of their importance to the settler colonial project. Leigh Anderson, "Society, Economy and Criminal Activity in Colonial Natal, 1860-1893" (University of Natal, 1993).

<sup>140</sup> Anne Kelk Mager, *Beer, Sociability, and Masculinity in South Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2010); Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler, eds., *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992).

<sup>141</sup> Recent scholarship of note includes Ashley Morris, "'Weeding Out' the Nature of the Ngoba Dagga Raid Killings of 1956" (BA (Hons.), University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2011); Craig Paterson, "Prohibition & Resistance: A Socio-Political Exploration of the Changing Dynamics of the Southern African Cannabis Trade, C. 1850 – the Present." (History MA Thesis, Rhodes University, 2009), [http://eprints.ru.ac.za/1848/1/Paterson\\_MA\\_TR10-57.pdf](http://eprints.ru.ac.za/1848/1/Paterson_MA_TR10-57.pdf); For more on the history of cannabis use in Southern Africa, the best source remains Brian M. du Toit, "Dagga: The History and Ethnographic Setting of Cannabis Sativa in Southern Africa," in *Cannabis and Culture* (The Hague: Moulton, 1975), 81–118.

they have been in passing, subsumed by larger analyses of intergenerational conflict, ethnic identity formation, or African labor systems.<sup>142</sup>

Yet alcohol—and that other semi-indigenous intoxicant, cannabis—certainly offered sociability, threatened colonial order, and potentially enabled resistance well before a confluence of factors led to intensified labor procurement and indigenous urbanization in the twentieth century. What histories did alcohol and cannabis bring to bear in the rapid changes of the twentieth century? This chapter will examine the relationship between the use of these intoxicants and the logics of racial and gender supremacy that typified nineteenth century settler colonialism. In so doing, I seek to further the valuable claims of historians of southern Africa and provide a meaningful genealogy of the use of alcohol and cannabis in nineteenth century Natal.

This chapter examines how discursive and legal claims over access to alcohol and cannabis impacted emergent racial hierarchies on the ground in Natal. As in settler colonies in North America and Australasia, British authorities sought to ban alcohol access to indigenous peoples for their own ‘protection.’ In 1856, Natal’s legislature banned access to ‘European’ alcohol for the native African population and attempted over the century to curtail indigenous forms of drinking. By declaring Africans (and later Indians) as morally impressionable and unfit for alcohol consumption, Natal’s settler elite attempted to grant themselves privileges that legitimated their sense of inherent superiority while justifying their claim to rule over nonwhite bodies (and their labor) in a contested colonial space. Yet, for white settler men to make good on their claims to proper control over colonial bodies and spaces, they themselves had to perform

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<sup>142</sup> Carton, *Blood from Your Children*; Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*; Houle, *Making African Christianity*; Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*.

‘correctly’ in relationship to alcohol. By demanding proper forms of alcohol use that privileged sobriety and specifically denied indigenous moral agency in resisting drunkenness, settlers in Natal policed their own raced and gendered behavior as well as that of Africans and Indians. Likewise, Natal’s legislature reserved the right of the Governor to pass laws prohibiting Indian consumption of cannabis as early as 1870, and recommended full legal prohibition throughout the 1870s and 1880s. However, the inability of the colonial state to effectively prohibit cannabis consumption (and generally alcohol use as well), demonstrated the limits of a colonial state to enact its own racial and legal prerogatives. These limits of settlement reveal the intersections of imperial and settler ambitions as well as indigenous and Indian attempts to subvert, respond, or redirect racialized hierarchies of power.

While this chapter is arranged largely chronologically, divided between the years before the Anglo Zulu War (1879) and the nearly two ensuing decades, it takes as its fulcrum two major legislative debates in 1890—the Definition of Natives Bill and the 1890 Liquor Law. While the settler state frequently encountered its frequent limitations in both periods, I argue that the earlier period was characterized by token laws and partial attempts to order the raced and gendered behavior of Natal’s varied populations in order to create an economically viable colony. Although labor existed chronically in short supply, the state visibly lacked the means to compel Africans into the economic relationships settlers desired, and sugar cane agriculture (and therefore Indian immigration) remained somewhat minor. The period following the Anglo-Zulu War until the annexation of the formerly independent Zululand to the northeast (1880-1897) marked a shift in the state of the colony, which saw a boost in settler confidence, population, and increasing attempts to subordinate labor interests through mobilizing raced and gendered conceptions of intoxicant usage. The reducing of the once-threatening Zulu Kingdom to only

nominal independence and eventual annexation tipped balances of political, economic, and social dominance more in favor of Natal's settler classes. The 1890 Liquor Law and the Definition of Natives Bill emerged in the midst of this post-1879 moment, as Natal's legislature began to act more aggressively to close loopholes that allowed for 'deviant' drinking and smoking practices. In so doing, the state's socio-legal apparatuses built upon previous discursive linkages between race and citizenship by attempting uphold a white monopoly on alcohol (and by extension civic inclusion) within the colony. Subsequently, Africans and Indians found themselves increasingly constrained (although not entirely) by settler attempts to draw them into labor markets on their own terms. Intoxicants, which offered destabilizing forms of sociability that jeopardized both the racialized hierarchy and labor systems that undergirded Natal's settler society, increasingly became a target of legislators, newspaper reporters, and missionaries after 1880.

In the post Anglo-Zulu War period, the settler colonial state developed considerably in Natal. For its first thirty five years of existence, Natal was a small frontier colony, bordering a much larger indigenous Zulu polity. Like other contemporary colonies such as British Columbia, New Zealand, and Western Australia, Natal had existed primarily as a thinly populated frontier colony whose inhabitants resolutely believed—that with hard work and generous immigration enticements—they would become numerically predominant by the end of the century. While this did happen in the other three colonies, it did not occur in Natal. By 1880, Zululand had been defeated by the British and existed as a semi-independent satellite of Natal, swelling an indigenous population that already greatly outnumbered the settler society. As a result, Natal embarked on a markedly different course by the last years of the nineteenth century as the realization slowly began to dawn upon settlers that they would never have the demographic legitimacy they saw in contemporary societies. Consequently, predominant settler

attitudes toward indigenous peoples began to transform. Viewing indigenous Africans as childlike, willful, and in need of indeterminate paternalistic guidance from white society, Natal's settler government worked to harden pre-existing divisions between white citizens and non-white subjects, strengthening their status as a minority-ruled colony. The increase in settler state power, bolstered by an increase in population, power, and autonomy from the home country (Natal obtained Responsible Government status in 1893) allowed Natal's settlers to more firmly demarcate boundaries between white and indigenous society. Debates over the significance and nature of alcohol consumption throughout the 1880s and 1890s attest to the rise in settler power and a renewed drive to subordinate Africans and Indians to racialized hierarchies of power in order to provide the sense of social stability and the compelled labor that the Natal required. Invigorated by its new political position after the war, and concerned with maintaining minority hegemony, Natal's Legislative Council extensively debated three problematic instances of nonwhite drinking: traditional beer parties, Indian access to liquor, and the eligibility of 'exempted' natives to consume alcohol.

### **From Discourse to Debate: Alcohol, Racial Coding, and Self-Control in Natal**

Historians of early colonial Natal have frequently stressed the limited power of the colonial state and settler society in particular. Michael Mahoney has characterized the state in the eyes of indigenous Africans as 'too weak to hate' and relatively unable to constrain their movements beyond token pronouncements. Rob Morrell has described early Natal as a colonial backwater with a minor settler population and without the means to enforce its implied authority.<sup>143</sup> While Natal's settlers may themselves have also viewed the colony as vulnerable,

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<sup>143</sup> Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*; Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*.

they also actively attempted to erect a society as quickly as possible, passing a flurry of laws in the first decade of the colony's existence (1843-1853), and setting up a system of indigenous land reserves and native law that more often than not was embodied by the singular efforts of Theophilus Shepstone, who served the Secretary of Native Affairs until 1875. It is therefore unsurprising that within the first two decades of annexation, Natal's colonial government saw fit to ban the consumption of 'European liquor' for Africans, in effect making the intoxicant a white monopoly, but one that needed to be exercised with considerable restraint by colonists. Yet, this restraint was not guaranteed; in this way Natal's early settler society (comprising a relatively small number of European settlers in the midst of a far larger indigenous population) mirrored other contemporary nascent British settlements around the globe. In particular, Natal most closely resembled British Columbia, which existed as an independent frontier colony from 1849 until 1871, when it joined the new Canadian confederation. As historian Adele Perry has made clear, British Columbia was far from the orderly settler society that British colonial officials envisioned; rather, it was 'on the edge of empire,' a distant settlement of mainly disreputable white men surrounded by a much more numerous indigenous population.<sup>144</sup> Like in Natal, alcohol use in British Columbia was rampant, leading to troubling forms of same sex and interracial sociabilities that challenged the idealized image of a settler colony desired by officials, missionaries, and a small number of elites.

The instability of new constellations of raced and gendered categories, created by the collision of settlers, migrants and indigenous peoples in the spaces of Natal, predated legal attempts to rein in the potential colonial disorder. Instances where alcohol upset the ostensible order of the colony can be found in print culture, which archived a whole series of challenges to

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<sup>144</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

racial distinction, distinction that was threatened by white drunken behavior. The Archbishop of Cape Town, Robert Gray, upon visiting the new colony of Natal in the early 1850s, decried the drunken state of its white population:

Already the natives are becoming educated, in a certain sense, by dwelling among those, many of whom are practically living in worse than heathenism. Three years ago I saw the finger of a Zulu pointed with scorn at a drunken Englishman in the streets of Durban. ...There will follow an almost total loss of respect and reverence for the white man.<sup>145</sup>

Archbishop's Gray says much about the stakes of alcohol consumption and social behavior in the colony. The whiteness of settler men was dependent upon 'proper' behavior that stressed self-control and restraint over wanton consumption and disorder. As Gray was quick to note, white male self-control was understood chiefly in relationship to rule over indigenous Africans. By failing to demonstrate sobriety or restraint, the virtues of white masculine control could not be employed to justify colonial occupation, which threatened the long-term viability of a settler minority state.

Gray's declarations echoed the concerns of settlers that wrote to the *Natal Witness*, the major paper in the colony's capital, Pietermaritzburg. One such admonishment appeared in the 26 December, 1862 edition of the paper, penned by an anonymous author self-identified, appropriately enough, as 'Young Natal.' The letter Young Natal penned was titled 'The Kafir and His Prospects,' but the piece said as much about settler expectations as those they held for Africans. Despairing at the lack of Christian virtue among colonists, Young Natal imagined a conversation between himself and a native man asked to convert to Christianity (and by extension adopt European customs). The exchange did not reflect well on the state of settler society, particularly around the use of intoxicants:

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<sup>145</sup> John William Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal: A Journal of a First Tour of Visitation Among the Colonists and Zulu Kafirs of Natal* (Oxford: Macmillan & Co, 1855), xxvii.

'Where is the difference between me and the believer? He wears trousers, I wear none. He smokes tobacco, I smoke *dacha*. He gets drunk on brandy, while I adhere to *jualla* [*utshwala*, indigenous beer]. He curses and swears by his God, I curse and swear by my chief. Except in these particulars I see no difference!'<sup>146</sup>

Young Natal's comparison offers an effective attempt at chastising the 'uncivilized' nature of Natal's settlers by contrasting them unfavorably with indigenous Africans. Rather than serving as examples of Christian civilization and superiority, they are depicted as dissolute, lacking self-control, and failing ultimately to provide an example for morally susceptible indigenes to follow. The piece effectively sets up a dichotomy of competing masculinities—both of which are rendered unacceptable for the security of the colony. Gray and 'Young Natal's' invectives offer a glimpse of settler critique hinging around alcohol consumption—Africans were to be banned from drinking due to their perceived moral failings, but whites were to provide proof of their superiority through proper alcohol consumption, a trait that many in early Natal society appeared to lack.

As a result, settler men were called to account for their drunkenness for having betrayed the racial underpinnings that supported the very settler project. Such was the case for Martin Swindells, a young colonist who had been arrested following a public moment of drunkenness in the colonial capital of Pietermaritzburg in 1865. Swindells subsequently sent an apology to the Attorney General, recognizing both his social infraction but attempting to justify his actions, so as to lessen the social embarrassment and collective disgrace he had received. On the night in question, Swindells alleged that he had visited a local canteen and enjoyed two glasses of gin, before desiring a third:

Unfortunately the gin was just finished, and instead thereof I was unwise enough to take brandy. Directly after I had taken it, I felt the effects of my indiscretion, and on my way homewards, I had the misfortune to drop my stick, and in looking for it, I lost my cap

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<sup>146</sup> Young Natalian, "The Kafir and His Prospects," *The Natal Witness*, December 26, 1862.

also. I continued sometime upon my hands and knees feeling, for the night was very dark, for my lost property. My impression is that with staying so long with my head downwards together with the brandy I had just drunk, combined to make me helpless, as many attempts that I made to rise were utterly futile. That I was not drunk is proved by the fact that while lying on my back, I wound up my watch, and was perfectly conscious of where I was, and also remonstrated strongly with the Policemen who took me up against conveying me to the Police Station.<sup>147</sup>

The episode is somewhat farcical as Swindells simultaneously attempts to confess and yet contextualize his actions. He was careful to mention his articles of social standing—his walking stick, cap, and watch—and in fact, blames them for the onset of the actions that led to his being identified as a drunkard. In emphasizing his attire, Swindells worked to reaffirm a responsible white male status now threatened by his public drunkenness. To do so, Swindells emphasized items in his possession that would mark him as a gentleman; the stick, cap, and watch became indicators of his class (and race) status in an attempt to bolster his social standing. Finally, Swindells attempted to defend his maligned sobriety by making claims to control (over his watch) and knowledge (of his location).

Swindells' testimony is more than a mere example of an apologetic letter in colonial print culture; in it, one can perceive the stakes of maintaining a particular form of gendered and raced hierarchy in Natal's settler colonial society. Closing his letter, Swindells took care to emphasize his respectability and to minimize the shame that his arrest has brought upon him:

I beg to express sincere regret that such a thing should have occurred, and I hope that you will be pleased to receive the explanation I have given with the assurance that such disgrace shall not again be attached to my name.<sup>148</sup>

Swindells' apology recognized his criminal infraction through drunkenness, and also woreds to reinstate his legitimacy as a settler man by writing a controlled letter of remorse to the Attorney General. The apology also underscored the idea that Swindells' drunkenness was an aberration,

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<sup>147</sup> PAR, Attorney General's Office, (hereafter AGO) file 1/8/7 folder 112A/1865

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

rather than a regular behavior, in effect, shoring up his identity as a controlled settler who suffered an occasional lapse rather than an inherent moral failing. Despite bans on indigenous drinking and public drunkenness, illegal forms of alcohol consumption continued to present a problem for settlers as whites and newly arrived Indians drank to excess (and Africans continued to drink at all). Newspaper trial reports from the 1860s and 1870s show regular reports of drunkenness for Europeans, Indians, and Africans in the colony.<sup>149</sup>

On November 30, 1887, postal clerk Dawson Stransham submitted an application for a promotion within the Natal civil service. After a year and a half of work for the Durban Post Office, the twenty-nine year old Stransham felt he was qualified for the increase in salary and status, and his application was processed accordingly. However, correspondence between colonial officials soon made clear that Stransham's record was far from exemplary. Rather, his history with the post office revealed frequent allegations of drunkenness, irregular behavior, and unexplained absences that confused his superiors and exasperated his colleagues.

“Mr. Stransham is so very unreliable that I could not recommend him for promotion,” confessed J. Chadwick, Natal's Postmaster General, in response to the application. “Indeed I only refrain from asking that he should be dismissed in view of Mr. Coleman's desire to try him again.”<sup>150</sup> John Coleman, Chadwick's subordinate and the postmaster in charge of the bustling port city, was two years younger than Stransham but already an experienced and British-trained

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<sup>149</sup> I have found frequent mention of drunkenness reports in both the *Natal Witness* and *The Natal Mercury*; these findings are corroborated in Leigh Anderson's 1993 thesis on crime in Natal. See: Anderson, “Society, Economy and Criminal Activity in Colonial Natal.”

<sup>150</sup> Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (hereafter PAR), Colonial Secretary's Office (hereafter CSO) folder 1200, file 1888/4627

administrator who continued to press for additional opportunities for the young man, even as he continued to grow particularly unreliable.

While Dawson Stransham would regularly put in the necessary hours of labor required at the Durban post office, he had periods that were euphemistically referred to by his supervisors as “not being altogether himself.” These problems appear to have reached their highest recorded point in the spring months of 1887, as reports of Stransham’s irregularities peaked in September and October of that year. Coleman reported to the Postmaster General that one night,

Mr. Stransham was not by any means sober. I was compelled to send him away at 7pm. After he had left the sorted letters were checked and some 30 mis-sorts were discovered... but for the fact of a check having been made this mis-sorted correspondence would have sustained a week's delay in Durban.<sup>151</sup>

In light of increasing complaints in the spring of 1887, it would appear that Stransham’s application for a promotion<sup>152</sup> was as much a means to get away from his increasingly frustrated colleagues, who were tiring of his behavior. Yet, as 1888 dawned, things rapidly grew worse. In February, Stransham had more drunkenness reports and failed to show up to work, only to finally alienate even his most ardent supporters like John Coleman by September. And yet, Stransham was *still* not dismissed for his irregularities on the job. His supervisors may have been exasperated, but they either interpreted his continuous lapses as mere aberrations or they felt the need to protect him as a white male settler in the hopes of straightening out his behavior, which threatened white dominance in a racially stratified colony.

Finally, in October of 1888, after a particularly eventful two weeks that included sleeping in the office, being arrested for public drunkenness, and fabricating a stay in the local Addington

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<sup>151</sup> PAR, CSO 1200, 1888/4378

<sup>152</sup> The promotion would have required that Stransham moved from coastal Durban to Pietermaritzburg, about fifty miles inland. Such a move would have at solved the immediate problem of angry coworkers in the Durban office.

Hospital for an ostensible ‘overdose of laudanum,’ Chadwick and Coleman both came to the decision that Stransham’s behavior could no longer be justified, and instead had to be rejected as it destabilized the racial order of Natal. Stransham was terminated promptly, although he continued an ultimately futile struggle with the colonial office to have his dismissal recognized as a resignation instead. Claiming he had ‘resigned,’ Stransham and his wife left the colony in November for the brighter pastures of Johannesburg, then the largest city in the independent Boer Republic of the Transvaal and newly discovered goldfield.<sup>153</sup>

The Stransham affair illustrates the lengths that colonial officials would go to protect the monopoly of white drinking and sociability even when confronted with antisocial behavior like public drunkenness and missed work. Discussing the situation with the Colonial Secretary, Natal Postmaster J. Chadwick mobilized understandings of race and masculinity in order to make his reluctant pronouncement in favor of Stransham’s dismissal:

Mr. Stransham has recently married, and it might be a serious thing for him to be thrown out of employment—though he would, of course have no one to blame but himself—and I would therefore suggest that he be given a trial in some other dept. But for his weakness as regards drink he would not be a bad officer. In some other office, where his hours would always be regular he might be able to time his periods of indulgence so as to avoid their interfering with his duties.<sup>154</sup>

Chadwick’s analysis is particularly telling in light of Stransham’s two year employment history with the postal service. He had routinely suffered irregularities after periods of acceptable service. Yet, Stransham’s alcohol-related incidents were treated simply as lapses and indiscretions, rather than inherent moral failings. Additionally, Chadwick’s mention of Stransham’s marital status indicates the raced and gendered expectations of Natal’s settlers. As a

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<sup>153</sup> This move was far more significant than his initial attempt to relocate to Pietermaritzburg; Johannesburg is 350 miles northwest of Durban, and then outside of British control. PAR, CSO 1200, 1888/4627

<sup>154</sup> PAR, CSO 1200, 1888/4096

married man, Natal society demanded that Stransham fulfill his patriarchal obligations in order to perform as responsible, *white* colonist. In so doing, Stransham's behavior could be seen as irregular rather than systemic; he suffered occasional lapses in proper white behavior rather than demonstrating his moral deficiency as an indigenous man.

Rather than possessing an *inherently* degraded state due to his continued alcohol-related infractions, colonial officials took Stransham's race and gender as qualities to be defended in a colony built upon perceived racial difference. Therefore, cases like Stransham required defending by the colonial society, and his excessive consumption had to be accommodated, understood, and managed, lest the racial lines of access created by settlers be undermined by men failing at performing self-control and sobriety—hallmarks of whiteness and masculinity. Thus, it is unsurprising that even the sympathetic Chadwick would write after Stransham's dismissal that it was unfortunate that his employee could not find work that would allow him to pursue his immoderate drinking at more 'amenable periods.' These amenable periods were to occur out of public view, lest fellow settlers—and even more dangerously, Zulu subjects—view a servant of crown and colony failing at performing white, male, patriarchal control as a consequence of his undisciplined drinking.

Gray, Swindells and Stransham notwithstanding, settlers appear to have been primarily concerned with the specter of African drinking; it was through this lens that other forms of consumption—Indian and European drunkenness in particular—were evaluated. The majority of cases described within the *Natal Witness* and *Natal Mercury*, despite moments of behavior policing for white men, report and decry instances of nonwhite drinking. Scholars differ in their assessment as to why this may have been the case. Leigh Anderson has asserted that “African

drunkenness was perceived by whites as a far greater social problem than was white drunkenness. This was because African drunks appeared to pose a threat to the peace and security of the colonists, whereas a white drunk was seen as having fallen from society, and as such did not seem to threaten that society.”<sup>155</sup> I agree that in general, white settlers appear to have viewed African drunkenness as a far greater social problem than its white counterpart, but not because white drunks did not threaten settler society. If that were the case, men like Swindells would not have to publicly apologize so profusely, nor would men like Grey render such stringent reprimands on drink. While earlier passages have made clear that white settler drunkenness could and did threaten white society precisely by undermining raced notions of propriety and order that undergirded settlement, the act of indigenous drinking exposed the limits of a settler state at compelling indigenous action. Thus, both white male drinking and indigenous consumption were viewed as constitutive challenges to colonial order, although the far larger African population revealed the fragility of colonial power more readily.

Throughout Natal’s first two decades, African drinking remained a fearful prognostication of disorder and the threat to be guarded against. An editorial in *The Natal Mercury* in 1868 bemoaned the constant scourge of African drinking, making explicit comparisons to the ‘problem’ of indigenous drinking in other settler societies:

Upon the coastlands Kafirs seem thoroughly infected with the craving for strong drink. Nothing tempts them so much as ardent spirits. Even money is in many instances only valued as a means of buying rum. The Zulus appear to yield just as completely to this acquired vice as did the Indians of America. It bids fair to be a far more potent agent in fashioning the future of this people than any system of political treatment, or any kind of social or education influence.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Anderson, “Society, Economy and Criminal Activity in Colonial Natal,” 213.

<sup>156</sup> *Natal Mercury*, 18 January 1868. Cited in *Ibid.*, 171.

This editorial marshaled contemporary discourses of a transnational settler project that placed Europeans in direct conflict with indigenous peoples around the globe.<sup>157</sup> The author underlined the imagined moral susceptibility of Zulu peoples by their yielding to the ‘acquired vice’ of alcohol, an act that made them readable as benighted indigenes resembling the ‘Indians of America.’<sup>158</sup> The discursive power of such statements linked settlement on a global scale while presenting drinking as a ‘problem’ that must be addressed by the settler state, justifying its claims to intervention in the lives of indigenous peoples, even if the state lacked the coercive power it desired at this point.

From 1856 to 1896, Natal’s government amended its liquor laws no fewer than seven times. Nearly every year, Parliamentary sessions saw the debating of multiple bills in an attempt to monitor, correct, and control alcoholic consumption and safeguard properly social behavior. Settlers interpreted drunkenness among Africans through a lens of racialized hierarchy that they used to support their rule in Natal. In attempting to legislate for African drinking, Natal’s politicians specifically drew upon comparisons that relied upon an understanding of Europeans as more sober-minded and imbued with self-control than their perpetually puerile charges. In 1890, Henry Bale maintained before the Legislative Assembly that:

The same stigma of disgrace does not attach to a Native who becomes inebriated which attaches to a European, nor have Natives the same strength of will or the same moral purpose which Europeans generally have, and consequently in battling against this demon they certainly labour under very considerable disadvantage.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Such an assertion would have echoed well with other voices both in Parliament and in Natal’s Legislative Chamber; Charles Barter and J.A. Roebuck both spoke of the decline of indigenous Africans, using Native Americans as examples of that decline. Barter, *The Dorp and the Veld*, 175–76; Great Britain Parliament and Hansard, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, 116:272–276.

<sup>158</sup> For more on constructions of global indigeneity and global settlement, see Chapter 4.

<sup>159</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: First Session--Thirteenth Council, from November 26, 1890, to February 10, 1891*, vol. XV (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1891), 649.

For Bale, the moral inadequacy of Africans which led to drunkenness served to both present an immediate threat to the white population of Natal as well as reinforce settler self-policing of behavior. If Africans were inherently more likely to be degraded by drink, then the habits of both an overwhelming indigenous population as well as ostensibly disciplined European settlers must be managed by a colonial state, lest the fragile weir of racial order supporting the colonial project be broken by a flood of beer and spirits.

Throughout the 1880s, settlers raised considerable debate over the appropriateness of allowing Africans to consume *utshwala*, or ‘native beer,’ which was far lower in alcohol content and used frequently as part of a regular diet. As a result, Natal’s settler legislators debated whether to dismantle African traditional drinking customs.<sup>160</sup> As Michael Mahoney has asserted, African drinking parties were, “quite simply the main form of entertainment and leisure-time socializing (in all the senses of that word) in rural Natal during this period.”<sup>161</sup> The drinking party served as an integral marker for most major social occasions in African society, and constituted a means of maintaining and strengthening community ties in Natal. Yet, for many of Natal’s leaders, African drinking was an indication of disorder that threatened an unreliable labor supply. In a language of paternalism mixed with crass self-interest, they sought to limit the ‘damaging’ effects of indigenous drinking parties that occurred occasionally. Sir John Robinson, the future first Prime Minister of Natal, thundered in 1886:

Beer drinkings are in every sense of the term demoralizing and pernicious. In the first place they breed habits of idleness in the Natives. They accustom the Natives to a mode of life which is wholly opposed to the life of an industrious being. They encourage a constant flow of domestic dissipation which is the parent of all sorts of disorders in the country districts. No one desires to interfere with the liberty of the subject less than I do,

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<sup>160</sup> Whether or not such a feat was even *possible*—given both the limited power of the colonial state and the resistance of Africans to settler interference—seems to have been debated less vigorously.

<sup>161</sup> Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*, 98.

but I do not hesitate to say that had the Natives white skins these beer drinkings would have been put down with a stern hand.<sup>162</sup>

Robinson declared that African alcohol-based sociability was inherently disordered and raucous, in effect, anti-social qualities specifically forbidden to settlers; its continued existence would threaten an ostensible divide between white access to ordered alcohol sociability and the paternalist prohibitions meted out to people of color. Most importantly, Robinson's denunciation of *utshwala* consumption lay primarily in the fact that it breeds 'idleness' and opposes industry. Robinson's speech is, in effect, an elegant rhetorical defense of racialized hierarchies for the sake of maintaining African labor for white settler needs.

African beer brewing proved particularly vexing to settlers for multiple reasons. First, *utshwala* and *umqombothi*, while lower in alcohol content, still played upon settler fears of an inebriated black population surrounding a white minority state. Secondly, African beer brewing represented a form of indigenous social agency, particularly in urban spaces like Pietermaritzburg and Durban, and nearby settlements like Edendale.<sup>163</sup> *Utshwala* brewing, pre-dating European arrival and still sanctioned by law, offered an alternative form of socialization independent of white approval. Observers were mixed in their regard of African beer drinking, although opponents in particular vocalized their objections in light of fears of aggressively unruly black drinkers. Missionary Frederick Mason wrote to the Resident Magistrate at Umgeni in 1880 to complain about the preponderance of native beer drinking taking place in the Christian township. Mason complained,

there are various houses on the station where Kafir beer is made in large quantities and where beer drinking parties are constantly taking place. The people concerned in these

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<sup>162</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: First Session--Twelfth Council, from September 7, 1886 to February 3, 1887*, vol. IX (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Printing and Publishing Co, 1887), 381.

<sup>163</sup> For more on Edendale, the African mission settlement located about fifteen miles from Pietermaritzburg, see chapter four.

practices disregard all counsel, and defy all authority. It appears that the occupants of the houses reside upon their own land, and think they can act without any restraint. Drunkenness, immorality, the abandonment of wives by their husbands, are some of the results which are taking place.<sup>164</sup>

The brewing of *utshwala*, in Mason's formulation, is particularly problematic in that it enables an insolent black independence. Beer drinkers "think they can act without any restraint" particularly as they own their homes (one particular advantage for the *amakholwa*), and are not beholden to legislation attempting to control their bodies specifically because of the traditional status of the brew and the lack of legal prohibition. Although Mason wrote primarily with the spiritual concerns of his charges in mind, his fears over 'unrestrained' Africans pursuing brewing independently of European controls would have found ready listeners among settler legislators. In addition, the potential aspect of independent African sources of revenue—*utshwala* was increasingly produced in the 1880s for sale to African men working in cities like Durban—gave cause for alarm to colonial officials. Although operating from different viewpoints and with varied goals in mind, missionaries, colonial officials, and legislators found consensus around the idea that *utshwala* had the potential to allow Africans to defy European control over their bodies and labor, risking the integrity of the settler project.

However, to Mason's dismay, the Secretary of Native Affairs had only a curt and concise response to his disapproval. Writing from Pietermaritzburg, John Shepstone instructed the Umgeni magistrate to inform Mason that "I know of no law of the Colony against which these natives have offended...I fail to see how I can take any action in the matter, further than informing the offenders that they are morally wrong."<sup>165</sup> Mason desired that 'moral wrongness' be translated directly into legal action, an opinion he shared with members of Natal's Legislative

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<sup>164</sup> PAR, SNA I/1/40 1880/410

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

Council. It is in moments like Mason's that the connection between discursive denunciations of alcohol and subsequent legal action is most clearly detailed.

The 'traditional' nature of *utshwala* particularly frustrated settler observers. *Utshwala* predated European arrival, and as both a beverage and cultural practice it thus proved hard for Europeans to eliminate, particularly as they had set up a framework of separate, ostensibly traditional Native Law to govern Africans in Natal. Efforts to ban or eliminate the beverage would run counter to the aims of securing a separate sphere for indigenous peoples based on preserving indigenous culture, and as such continued to fail. Ironically, many of the arguments for prohibiting *European* liquor for Africans depended on the rhetoric of preserving cultural and physical vitality in the face of degradation. In 1888, Cecil Yonge, a legislator and local farmer, got to the heart of settler frustrations with the stubborn independence of *utshwala* drinking:

I have no intention to allow the Native to suppose that we intend to show any great reverence for their ancient constitutional customs. The sooner we set to work to knock their customs on the head the better it will be for the Native and the white man, and the progress and prosperity of this Colony. It is all very well to speak of giving the poor man his beer. Unfortunately, beer and work do not go together in the Native mind.<sup>166</sup>

The continued existence of independent drinking formations, like the persistence of polygamy and *ilobola* despite colonial opprobrium, revealed not just the limits of settler hegemony, but the inherent contradictions of 'native administration' that rested upon notions of preserving traditional culture. Yonge's grumblings on the floor of the Legislature reveal the stakes for the settlers; control over African drinking directly mapped onto questions over African autonomy within the colony. More importantly, the ultimate goal of control over native bodies was the coercion of Africans formations most amenable to the needs of nascent settler capitalist expansion. After all, as Yonge was quick to state, beer and work do not go well together. For

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<sup>166</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Third Session--Twelfth Council, from July 18 to October 12, 1888*, vol. XII (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, "Times of Natal," 1889), 128.

men like Yonge, African drinking parties were a form of autonomous and dangerous socialization that threatened the productivity of African men who worked on farms owned by men like Yonge.

Yet Zulu elders had their own concerns about the nature of drinking parties as well. While these parties continued to be predominant events in African society, recent changes brought on by the wage labor introduced by settlers had begun to alter the parties themselves. Previously, drinking parties served to reflect certain patriarchal forms of order, by paying particular respect to the rank and privilege of elder men.<sup>167</sup> Women, if allowed to be present, were strictly segregated, and younger men were expected to give pride of place to their elders. Yet younger men, emboldened by independent access to wealth through the colonial economy, and with a decreased sense of obedience to chiefs and elders undercut by colonial authorities, began to rebel, rejecting patriarchal rules of deference, making sexual advances at women in attendance, and even mixing the *utshwala* with *isishimiyana*, a new and extremely potent alcohol made from sugar cane treacle.<sup>168</sup> The potential existed for what Jeff Guy has usefully termed elsewhere ‘an accommodation of patriarchs,’ a conditional understanding between white settler legislators and African elders that disagreed with the potential destabilizing power of African youth subverting traditional order in the colony.<sup>169</sup> In this moment, African chieftains could make common cause (of a limited nature) with Natal’s legislators, and form a fragile consensus on the need to limit the ‘excess’ of African drinking parties. While elders would not have agreed

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<sup>167</sup> Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*, 99; Carton, *Blood from Your Children*, 70–72.

<sup>168</sup> Carton, *Blood from Your Children*; Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*.

<sup>169</sup> There is a danger in investing too heavily in Guy’s narrative of patriarchal accommodation, particularly in the way that it constrains the agency of African women. Yet in this particular instance, Guy’s theory is both useful and evocative. Alcohol did provide a means of both sociability and intergenerational challenge along gendered lines. Jeff Guy, “An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal” (presented at the Conference on Masculinities in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban, 1997); for more on ‘patriarchal alliances’, see: Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, & Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Heinemann, 1992).

as vehemently with Robinson about the inherent degradation of beer parties, brewing intergenerational conflict between would appear to demonstrate that moments of consensus were reached between the two disparate groups of African elders and settler officials.

### **Debating Drink: Alcohol Legislation and Racial Designation in Natal**

In 1888, the unthinkable happened—Africans who were exempted from Native Law were legally allowed to purchase and consume European liquor. The Natal Legislative Council had inadvertently allowed a legal redefinition of the term ‘Native’ to take place in 1888, allowing Africans who applied for exemption from Native Law to be removed from all inherent restrictions for Natives—in effect, treating them as Europeans under the Natal legal system.<sup>170</sup> While exemption from Native Law theoretically allowed Africans to exit a legal system designed for their separate development and steeped in an ‘invented tradition’ (to use Terrence Ranger’s evocative phrase), the reality was far different. While exempted Africans (the *amazimtoti* in isiZulu) were indeed placed on the same legal footing as Europeans (and also forbidden from partaking in polygamy, thereby sealing the limits between indigenous social formations and colonial ‘civilization’), they were not allowed three rights that whites possessed—the right to alcohol consumption, the right to purchase firearms, and the right of the franchise. These divisions assured white settlers that even if Africans could acculturate, they would never be offered full equality with the settlers they outnumbered nearly eight to one. While both the firearms and franchise aspects of the laws had already been ‘corrected,’ the alcohol portion had been allowed to stand for nearly two years. Realizing the enormous consequences of their inattention, Natal’s white legislators quickly worked to define the unruly category of Native in

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<sup>170</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--Thirteenth Council, from April 30 to August 7, 1891*, vol. XVI (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1891), 87–90.

order to better control indigenous bodies and restrict their access to rights that they believed only settlers should legitimately possess.

The debate over the ‘Definition of Natives Bill’ of 1890 centered over whether or not to return Africans to their legal status before the debacle of 1888—exempted Africans would still come under European law, although their access to alcohol would be removed. Natal’s legislators did not find themselves in agreement over whether or not the legal restrictions should be reestablished. Some legislators were not in favor of restoring the ban for the minority of exempted Africans. John Bainbridge argued

this measure, if carried, will confer a very great hardship upon a number of Natives who are loyal and who are highly civilized, and have adopted our civilization, much more so than you find many whites practicing in different parts of the Colony. They have all the European’s customs, they have civilized food, and it is a very natural thing when they are sick that they should want a little pontac or spirit.<sup>171</sup>

In this instance, desires for the maintenance of Natal’s racial hierarchy ran headlong into notions of paternalist caretaking. Legislators against the restoration of the law supported the idea that a minority of elite, Africans granted full European privileges could demonstrate the possibility of cultural assimilation. To allow a fraction of *amazimtoti* the drink would not overwhelmingly change settler hegemony, and could serve to additionally channel frustration with inequality by making rights possible for a tiny few that could demonstrate they had reached a point of civilizational equity with their colonial rulers. In addition, according to Bainbridge and other colonists, the *amazimtoti*, provided that they demonstrated sufficiently ‘proper’ behavior through self-policing, could earn European approval and limited recognition of rights within the colony while simultaneously serving as a moral beacon to errant whites and the vast African majority.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., XVI:14.

Yet other legislators argued for a consistent restriction across racial lines by reaffirming the ban on alcohol. Reminding others of the restrictions in place over firearms and the vote, James Hulett argued that exempted Africans were *not* legally equal with Europeans. Rather, the entire event was, in his eyes, a ‘mistake’ that needed rectifying rather than a denial of rights to a class of citizens. Hulett furthered that exempted Africans therefore only possessed a portion of “European so-called liberty” and the reinstatement of the ban would be a colonial ‘blessing’ that would protect them from degradation. Liberty became a particularly powerful mobilizing word for the anti-alcohol legislators. Rather than denying exempted Africans ‘liberty’ by removing their legal right to drink, they were instead providing them with a sense of ‘liberty’ by freeing them from the degradation and humiliation of alcohol. Dr. Peter Sutherland, agreed with Hulett, asserting that “the privilege of obtaining of spirits according to their own free will” was an unthinkable privilege to extend to Africans. Sutherland maintained that such a denial was absolutely necessary as

the black population of this Colony must remain—no matter how they exempt themselves from the effect of Native law—they must remain for many generations a peculiar people, liable to exceptions on account of their peculiarities. Their peculiarities are such that if we legislate for them, as we legislate for Europeans, we shall be inflicting upon them a very severe evil, an evil they cannot cope with, and an evil which is decimating them all through Africa [for] our Natives who are in a state of tutelage, and who must remain yet a-while minors and children for whom the parents must make due provision.<sup>172</sup>

Men like Sutherland and Hulett ultimately sought to counter the assertions of the pro-alcohol group by asserting challenging the very nature of the concept of ‘liberty.’ These settlers interpreted liberty through a racialized hierarchy, advocating for ‘European’ liberty predicated upon self-control in the face of ‘African’ liberty centered on moral weakness and European paternalism. In this formulation, the right to consume alcohol became not a political right, but

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<sup>172</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council 1890-91*, XV:14.

rather an expression of moral fitness and ultimately an entitlement for settlers to defend in the face of indigenous encroachment.

In spite of the disagreements, we can detect the shared assumptions of settler colonialism amid the cacophony of competing voices comprising Natal's Legislative Assembly. From the very beginning, the Definition of Natives Bill demonstrated attempts to form legal solutions over discursive depictions of race and civilization around alcohol. The very need to define the 'native' in this instance stemmed ultimately from the question of access to alcohol for people within the colony. Thus, the debates over the Definition of Natives Bill offer a crucial understanding of racial formation within a colonial context. Even if the various members of the Legislative Assembly disagreed over whether or not exempted Africans should have access to alcohol, each of the speeches reveal overlapping sets of assumptions about Africans and their relationship to the colonial state. Legislators in the debate utilized the larger settler claim that indigenous peoples were the puerile wards of a state that acquired them as well as their lands and therefore must be preserved from the threat of degradation brought upon by the colonizers themselves.<sup>173</sup> Such a discursive formulation both dodged responsibility for conquest and contained a rationale for policing white settler behavior.

In the midst of the debate over a nativeness framed around exemption and exclusion, Legislator Henry Bale took the opportunity to draw upon larger discourses of indigeneity and degradation throughout the larger empire. Disagreeing with a request of African Christians to allow the bill to pass, so that they could share in full privileges with Europeans (including alcohol), Bale argued:

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<sup>173</sup>Even for legislators like Bainbridge, who advocated limited access to alcohol for ostensibly civilized Africans, alcohol remained a privilege for white settlers, not to be granted at large to the far more numerous indigenous population.

the object of this Bill is merely to deprive them of the opportunities of becoming more degraded than they were in their heathen state. I would much rather that the Natives of the Colony should remain in the gross barbarism which characterized them than they should become as degraded as the Red Indian of North America, or as many of the Natives of the neighbouring [Cape] Colony are. . . .the use of intoxicating liquors by Natives who have been accustomed to civilizing influences for many years is most lamentable.<sup>174</sup>

Such a statement depended upon earlier discourses that rendered Africans as part of a larger schema of global indigeneity, peoples to be rendered distinct from Anglophone settlers around the world. Indeed, Bale's argument matched the *Natal Witness* editorial two decades earlier nearly word for word.

As Natal's settler legislators attempted to grapple with the definition of native peoples in relation to alcohol consumption, they also worked to try to extend the alcohol ban to Indian peoples within the colony. Throughout the 1880s Natal's Legislative Council actively debated whether the alcohol ban should be extended to Indians—making alcohol purely a white privilege and mapping directly onto the discourses of white supremacy that undergirded the colony. Several members of Natal's Legislative Council argued that Indians should also be barred from consuming or acquiring liquor as this would serve to halt the sale of liquor to Africans. The idea of Indian drinking complicates the racial divisions of Natal, complicating a simple white/black divide. Most arguments either for or against Indian drinking ultimately derived their legitimacy from the original settler/native divide in Natal. Settler arguments for banning liquor either asserted Indians were inherently as degraded as native Africans and disqualified from drinking, or they acted as the conduit by which Africans obtained illicit liquor and therefore must be prevented from betraying the natural racial/moral order of the colony. Likewise, settler (as well as Indian) arguments in favor of continuing Indian consumption of alcohol operated from a

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<sup>174</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council 1891*, XVI:88–89.

position of their fitness in the face of native susceptibility, or underlined a shared imperial investment in building a colony in the midst of indigenous lands. Settlers may have relied upon racial tropes in order to defend their hierarchical society, but they required Indian labor by the late 1870s in order to sustain the sugar industry that dominated the coast, one of Natal's few reliably successful economic ventures. This dependency upon Indian labor led to the defeat of multiple bills aimed at curtailing Indian consumption of alcohol throughout the 1880s. While many of the legislators clearly favored restricting Indian drinking, the idea that such restrictions could limit the continued profitability of Indian labor recruitment often undercut votes in favor of restrictive legislation.

Settler politicians mobilized the specter of the degenerate African as a justification for the continued policing of alcohol for nonwhite peoples within the colony. Natal politician James Reynolds made clear his investment in the overall debate, asserting:

I would prohibit the sale of liquor not only to the natives and the Indians, but to all men of colour. If this recommendation is not carried my opinion is we will be hardly able to tell where we are driving.<sup>175</sup>

In this speech, Reynolds explicitly lays claim to creating a white monopoly on liquor consumption within Natal. If settlers could not maintain liquor—and the sociability it provided—as a solely white preserve, then the very distinctions between African and European (and subsequently between whites/nonwhites in general) would break down, obscuring where settlers imagined they were ‘driving’ the colony. Ultimately, Reynolds’ speech links white control over alcohol with control over nonwhite populations in general. If the settler state could

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<sup>175</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: First Session--Eleventh Council, from July 5 to October 24, 1883*, vol. VI (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis and Sons, 1883), 98.

not restrict nonwhite peoples from drinking, then who, in the estimation of men like Reynolds, was truly controlling the colony?

Yet the opinion was not shared by all of Natal's legislators. Arguing in favor of continuing Indian access to drink, Darby maintained:

These men have come to this country and have served their five years of service. They are British subjects the same as ourselves. We cannot discover that they are given to the perpetration of greater iniquity in the use of intoxicating liquors than we are. Yet we want to disqualify them, and what is worse than that to disqualify them without notice.<sup>176</sup>

Drawing a line between indigenous peoples and all arrivants, or any color, Darby argued that Indians were no more susceptible to intoxication than white settlers—a distinction that implicitly referenced the moral unfitness of natives to drink. Pointing out their shared British subjecthood, Darby argued, that as fellow imperial occupiers of the land, Indians should therefore be able to consume liquor legally. By furthering the discourse along civilizational lines, Darby argued for Indian rights along a familiar axis of native unfitness.

As a result of these debates, legislators began to advance 'compromise' measures: later proposals stressed that Indians merely be banned from possessing 'portable liquor,' instead consuming as much liquor as they liked on the premises of licensed establishments. Several settlers decried that this would actually *increase* Indian drunkenness, as it forced all consumption to take place under white supervision and within a very limited period of time. Acting Colonial Secretary F. S. Haden rejected this idea in the 1890 debate, however, pronouncing:

As to Indians drinking themselves to death on the premises because the liquor can only be drunk on the premises, we can point to places in other parts of the world where it is quite a common thing to give licenses to houses where drink can alone be supplied on

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<sup>176</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Sixth Session--Twelfth Council, from April 10 to July 8, 1890*, vol. XIV (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1890), 190.

the premises (Mr. Yonge: Ireland.) *And in no worse a place than Ireland.* Let hon members take example thereby, and be influenced by it in the consideration of this bill.<sup>177</sup>

Haden argued in favor of the bill by comparing the legislation to other forms of colonial surveillance and management attempted throughout the empire. The reference to Ireland is particularly telling: Irish racial identification in the nineteenth century was particularly liminal in the eyes of many colonial administrators, and the moral legitimacy attached to alcohol consumption also rendered Irish subjects in Ireland as deviant and in need of management. This comparison served to strengthen arguments in favor of limiting a problematic population within imperial borders, marking Indians as suspect yet potentially reliable members of the imperial project.

In 1890 the Legislative Council refined its liquor codes yet again, but this time more thoroughly racializing the statutes. The new law reinforced the denial of alcohol access (save for indigenous beer) to Africans, irrespective of legal or social status, while Indians were subjected to the proposed compromise measure. No longer could Indians purchase alcohol in portable containers; all alcohol had to be consumed on the premises of licensed establishments. White people continued to be under no restrictions regarding consumption, although they did suffer criminal and social penalties for drunkenness.

The partial banning of Indian liquor solicited a variety of reactions throughout the colony. A significant number of Indians protested the passage of the 1890 law, with over three thousand petitioners specifically joining together in an appeal for the Legislature to repeal the act that same year. Led by Anglo-Indian interpreter Frank Ward, the 1890 Repeal Petition offers an illuminating Indian response to the limiting liquor statute. In it, the petitioners make appeals to

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 171–72.

self-control and proper behavior to claim their own share in alcohol access—and recognition as members of the larger civil polity—within Natal. These claims both echo and challenge settler racial attitudes as Indian people sought to articulate their own position within the settler colony.

The Repeal Petition began by listing the various origins of the ‘Indian’ class within Natal—indentured laborers, commercial traders, and freehold farmers in particular make the list—emphasizing that “all of such, on the whole, are recorded to be an industrious and respectable class of people in the Colony of Natal.”<sup>178</sup> By asserting that they were respectable and disciplined, the petitioners hoped to make a case for equality with the settler elites that seek to deprive them of access to drink.

Rightfully discerning the relationship between alcohol consumption and recognition as legitimate and disciplined members of colonial society, the Repeal Petitioners worked to explain their racial existence within the white/black hierarchy of Natal by claiming to share both imperial affinities and inherent self-discipline with the white settler population. The petitioners deployed a strategy that asserts continuity as British subjects and difference from the indigenous populations in their midst, claiming an exempted status in the hope of legitimizing their claims to full inclusion:

As British-born subjects they were assured of the continuance of all the privileges and indulgences they enjoyed in their Native Land, but . . .to their utter dismay, to be betrayed and victimised by the unjust restrictions of said Liquor Law against them, which evidently is inadvertently brought to bear on the Coloured Race, although rightfully intended and justly brought into execution for Kafirs, natives of South Africa.<sup>179</sup>

In this passage, the petitioners worked to position themselves within the black/white racial hierarchies of colonial Natal. Noting the white monopoly that settlers wished not only to

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<sup>178</sup> "Memorial regarding the Indian Liquor Law 20 of 1890" (document 54: 1891) in PAR, CSO 1451 1891/3362, 1891/2453, 1891/4309

<sup>179</sup> Ibid

maintain but expand over people of color, the Repeal Petitioners sought to clarify their liminal position at the expense of indigenous peoples. It is here most clearly that the petitioners occupy the position that theorist Lorenzo Veracini has termed “exogenous others.” In Veracini’s formation, such populations exist in a settler paradigm ranging from “debased” to “virtuous,” where the virtuous are offered limited inclusion provided they assimilate properly, and the debased are to be restricted from acceptance.<sup>180</sup> The moralized divisions settler populations draw between exogenous populations frequently occur along racialized lines of difference.<sup>181</sup> In order to make these claims to inclusion, to ‘virtue,’ as an exogenous other group, the petitioners attempted both to establish their credentials as fellow British subjects while simultaneously reinforcing a settler normative standard of division between ‘proper’ colonists and the indigenes whose lands they occupy.

The petitioners did not attempt to circumvent the racialized hierarchies developing within Natal’s settler society; rather, they tried to reaffirm and redirect them. Acknowledging their nonwhiteness, the Repeal Petitioners nonetheless insisted that they were hard-working, orderly, and respectable, asserting that in spite of their racial difference they too are as hardworking as their fellow white colonists. Furthering this claim, the Petitioners marshaled the same gendered tropes of male responsibility that often delineated white claims to respectability with alcohol in Natal:

Your Excellency’s Memorialists beg to state that some of them—as respectable class of men—have for their consumption by the bottle, at their respective homes, with families

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<sup>180</sup> Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 26–28.

<sup>181</sup> Veracini in particular notes the transition of Irish from racialized, degraded others in nineteenth century American discourse to their limited and contingent acceptance as whitened and ‘virtuous’ others by the mid-twentieth century.

and friends; but the aforesaid liquor law being against them they are tempted to visit the canteens at unusual hours whenever a dram is required.<sup>182</sup>

The argument within the petition stated that Indian *men*—as householders and providers for their families—must possess alcohol in order to respectably socialize. Yet, for the petitioners, the Liquor Law deprived them of the ability to properly fulfill their position as male providers. The case for ‘virtue’ over ‘debasement’ led the petitioners to position themselves as respectable male citizens looking to provide for their families, a position undermined by the new law.

Finally, the Repeal Petitioners explicitly equated alcohol consumption with full inclusion within Natal’s civic polity. The petitioners directly noted that the settlers most invested in depriving Indians of access to drink also worked simultaneously to disenfranchise them as voters within Natal. Pointing to their recently successful appeal against disenfranchisement, the petitioners linked the right to vote to the right to drink (two privileges expressly forbidden to virtually all Africans). Having won the appeal on a claim to shared rights as British citizens, the petitioners were quick to press their claims based upon imperial affinity:

The flag that carries the ‘Union Jack’ will have its just and sympathizing Laws, but not that which is experienced in the Colony of Natal rendered to Her Majesty’s Subjects, who are, and may hereafter come into the Colony of Natal... but [had] never heard of such indignant and dastardly treatment brought to bear upon them and their unfortunate families by the irreconcilable and irrevocable process of the Liquor Law brought to bear upon a *Civilized Race* in the Colony of Natal.<sup>183</sup>

Ultimately, a sense of both shared imperial affinity and inherent difference from indigenous subjectivity that buttressed the Repeal Petitioners’ claim. Responding to moralizing rhetoric of Natal’s settlers, who sought to depict them as inherently unfit for civic (and drinking) equality, the petitioners mobilized raced and gendered modes of behavior to both assert superiority over

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<sup>182</sup> "Memorial regarding the Indian Liquor Law 20 of 1890"

<sup>183</sup> "Memorial regarding the Indian Liquor Law 20 of 1890"

indigenous Africans and a shared investment in the colony with whites. The Repeal Petition of 1890 was immediately disregarded by Natal's colonial establishment who declared it unacceptable to repeal such a law less than a year after it had been put into operation. To the extreme irritation of the Governor and legislators, Frank Ward and the petitioners responded exactly one year to the date after the passage of the law, asking yet again for repeal.

Yet not all members of the heterogeneous 'Indian' community agreed with the Repeal Petitioners. In response to both the law and the Repeal Petition, a smaller petition was organized in support of the 1890 Law. The 1891 Support Petition underlined ten key points in favor of the new Indian Liquor Law. Chief among them, the petitioners argued that drink was unknown to 'proper' Hindus and Muslims and that taking alcohol only served to 'degrade' them in the eyes of their countrymen, evoking similar rationale as the Repeal petitioners, albeit for different immediate ends<sup>184</sup>. The petitioners also reinforced the black/white axis of inclusion, by arguing that the law limited the likelihood of Indians offering alcohol to Africans, resulting in further indigenous degradation through spirituous liquors. The petitioners stressed, "we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that the demoralized amongst our people supply the natives with drink for most pitiable consideration." Such a discursive move sought to distance the bulk of the Indian population from allegations of alcohol smuggling, but it also serve to mark those that did as a degraded minority. In the logic of the Support Petition, Indians were protected by the removal of alcohol's temptations, which served to degrade a minority of the exogenous population and in turn further the moral decline of the far more numerous native peoples.

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<sup>184</sup> PAR, CSO 1451 1891/3362: Memorial in favour of the Indian Liquor Law

Natal's Governor and Legislative Assembly both resolutely refused to repeal the 1890 Law, having taken the better part of a decade to achieve some measure of legal limitation over the alcohol consumption of Indian peoples. Yet the law itself appeared to be rather ineffective in its immediately proposed aims, namely curtailing both Indian and African drunkenness. L. H. Mason, the official Protector of Indian Immigrants, decried the entire law as a failure. Writing to the Governor in 1891, Mason argued that not only were many members of the Indian community feeling roused to political agitation as they felt their rights were being limited, but that the law adversely affected states of public intoxication for Indians. Mason complained that subsequently, white canteen owners were only serving Indians bottles of liquor that had to be consumed entirely on the premises, whereupon, "the Indian after leaving the canteen does not go many yards before the liquor takes effect and he becomes helplessly drunk, half poisoned in fact with Natal rum, some of which is of the vilest description."<sup>185</sup> Referencing the Durban police report for the end of 1891, Mason also insisted that the illicit Indian trade in alcohol to Africans had been lessened—only for white settlers to fill the vacuum in black market activity. The entire stated purpose of the law—the limiting of Indian and African drinking—had not been achieved; indeed, the opposite had occurred, in Mason's view. Why then, did the Natal government consistently refuse to repeal the law?

The Legislature and Governor refused to repeal the partial ban on Indian drinking because it fulfilled settlers' racial/political needs rather than their immediate material ones. The enactment of legal restrictions on Indian drinking took place amid an increasingly fierce debate over the very state of Indian people within the colony. An increasing population of both former indentured laborers and urban shopkeepers had become prosperous and established in Natal

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<sup>185</sup> PAR, CSO 1451 1891/3362

throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Due to the relative inability of settlers to compel African laborers into providing a reliable labor supply sufficient to their needs, the economy of Natal depended upon a constant flow of Indian migrant labor, particularly in the sugar industry on the coast. Yet they could not legally compel Indian migrants to leave Natal after their terms of indenture were up, nor could they ban the movement of free or ‘passenger’ Indians who arrived primarily to supply the material needs of these laborers. As a result, by the 1880s, a significant number of Indian immigrants and their descendants increasingly came to occupy Natal’s cities and farms, a development many settlers saw as a direct threat. By the 1890s, Natal settlers began actively attempting to block Natal’s Indian population from exercising the franchise, lest they limit the political and social monopoly settlers desired to enact within the colony. As alcohol stood as a particularly salient marker of inclusion within a settler polity, namely through the discourse of moral fitness, settlers sought to deny Indians the legitimacy of drink as a means of marking them as inherently foreign and ineligible of inclusion.

The continued presence of Indians further troubled the fragile hegemony that white settlers desired to enact in Natal. Not only did the presence of an additional migrant population challenge the monopoly that whites hoped to maintain in erecting a settler minority state, it also challenged the ostensible claims of moral and inherent superiority that undergirded the entire enterprise in Natal. Sir Frederick Moor, who would later serve as Natal’s last prime minister prior to Union, asserted, “It is becoming a colonizing question for Natal. We are importing these Asiatics to settle down, to the detriment, nay, to the expulsion, of the white population.”<sup>186</sup> J. F. King, one of the representatives from Durban, put it even more bluntly in 1890, stating, “We are Europeans, and we can only respect Europeans. We can only associate with them, and be happy

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<sup>186</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council 1886*, IX:388.

with them.”<sup>187</sup> Yet Natal depended upon both Indian and African populations to support settler ambitions, despite King’s open cry for separation and distance. While settlers like King would have ostensibly desired to see a white-only colony, the reality of Natal’s demographics meant that the discursive limits of settlement demanded the establishment of white boundaries over civic participation and inclusion. In effect, Natalians attempted to create a whites-only colony psychically and civically if they could not be rendered one logistically. The establishment of structures of difference and separation were integral to this European-only association, and alcohol, with all of its attendant assumptions of moral fitness and legitimate claims to occupation, served as a critical manifestation of these desired divisions.

It is in this crisis of ‘comprehending’ an exogenous Asian population, one that Jodi Byrd has termed ‘arrivant settler colonialism,’ that Natal resembles other contemporary settler colonies.<sup>188</sup> British Columbia, California, and Queensland all found themselves flashpoints in a late nineteenth century global settler debate over the demographic constitutions ‘threatened’ by non-white immigration. Natal’s legislators recognized this as well. In 1888, Cecil Yonge reported before the Legislative Council:

It is of advantage to know that other colonies have had, and have at the present moment, under consideration this question, and it is gratifying to know that the position some of us take up in this Colony has its support in other parts of the world. It is pleasant to Europeans in this Colony to know that their white brethren in other parts of the world are resisting the introduction of these aliens to supplant them.<sup>189</sup>

In particular, Yonge praised the efforts of Queensland’s white settler constituency to resist Indian migrant labor in order to preserve the colony as a preserve of whiteness, even at the expense of economic growth.

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<sup>187</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council 1890*, XIV:295.

<sup>188</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2011).

<sup>189</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council 1888*, XII:179.

The presence of a significant Indian population in Natal challenged settler attempts to create a white-only settler polity that claimed to be the rightful, natural occupants of the colony. Although the Indian population created a unique set of pressures on the settler state, attempts to exclude and marginalize Indians also depended on pre-existing settler/native divides. Alcohol consumption served as a particularly visible marker of difference, drawing distinction between disciplined, controlled European colonists and morally unfit Africans. Additionally, Indian men and women worked to avoid the stigma of being seen as ‘degraded’ exogenous others in Natal society, and strove to make claims of moral respectability. These claims relied specifically on assertions of shared imperial affinities with white settlers as well as histories of ‘civilization’ in the face of native savagery. The passage of the Indian Liquor law of 1890 reveals the struggles over alcohol consumption as a marker of civic inclusion in Natal, and the subsequent battles over drink as the decade came to a close mirrored both the continued challenge Indians offered to white claims to monopoly over citizenship and wider struggles over inclusion waged by arrivant settler populations across the globe

### **Promotions and Violence: Life Under Alcohol Law in Natal, 1890-1897**

A very different case occurred in Natal with the attempted promotion of Solomon Kumalo. In 1891, Kumalo, a Zulu *kholwa*, or Christian convert, applied for a position within the colony’s civil service, most likely within the Department of Native Affairs in Pietermaritzburg. Like Stransham, Kumalo was employed as a low-level clerk, although in the office of the resident magistrate in Estcourt, then a rural farming town about sixty miles northeast of Pietermaritzburg.<sup>190</sup> Yet, unlike Stransham, Kumalo had earned the confidence and approval of

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<sup>190</sup> PAR, Secretary of Native Affairs Office (hereafter SNA), folder I/1/141, file 1891/561

Peter Paterson, his superior. However, Solomon Kumalo's application for permanent employment, or as the Victorian officers themselves termed it, a 'situation,' resulted in a disastrous charge against him.

Natal colonial officials responded to Kumalo's application by writing to his former educator and religious instructor, the Rev. Frederick Greene, in order to obtain a character reference. While Greene at first appeared to paint a positive picture of the *kholwa*'s character for colonial officials, he soon afterwards offered a damning, if spurious piece of evidence. According to Greene, he reluctantly had cause to report that another *kholwa* had told to him that he had heard from another man that Solomon Kumalo had been publicly drunk in Pietermaritzburg in the past. With no further concrete information than the thirdhand report of an unnamed witness, Greene passed on the information, and John Shepstone, the Secretary of Native Affairs duly rejected Kumalo's application outright. Solomon Kumalo did not take this rejection passively. With the help of a sympathetic lawyer, Thomas Carter, Kumalo wrote to the Secretary of Native Affairs, the colonial governor, and to his erstwhile accuser, the Reverend Greene.

The resultant official inquiry revealed both the profound injustice and the institutional prejudice that Kumalo in particular and Africans in general faced in relation to alcohol consumption. In a sworn statement to the colonial governor, Kumalo alleged:

I have endeavoured to ascertain from the said Reverend Greene who his informant was but he refuses to tell me and I am thereby precluded from bringing an action against the slanderer. And I swear that the statement that I was ever drunk in the streets of

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Pietermaritzburg or elsewhere is false and totally devoid of any foundation whatsoever but has been made maliciously and untruthfully with the object of injuring me.<sup>191</sup>

Kumalo was careful not to cast aspersion on the European clergyman, but made the focus of his critique specifically on the informant who had slanderously claimed that he had been drunk, costing him a permanent position. The response of all official parties, however, was to turn to the Reverend Greene, and ask for his information on the matter. Greene outright refused to assist, and the Colonial Office refused to intervene, leaving Kumalo without a job or reputation.

The exchange between Kumalo, Greene, and colonial officials offers a valuable insight into the politics of native drinking in colonial Natal. In response to official requests for information, Greene doubled down on his allegation while simultaneously claiming to be a mere observer to the malicious gossip that had destroyed Kumalo's nascent and promising career. Greene declined to release the names of Kumalo's first and secondhand accusers, and in response to Kumalo's personal request, condescended to write to his former student:

My dear Kumalo, I am very sorry to hear that you have been refused a situation with the Government service. ...I was asked some time ago from the SNA Office whether I knew you to be unsteady. I answered that I had never seen you drunk and that I did not think you had been. Afterwards I was told that you had been seen drunk in the streets and I was exceedingly sorry to hear it. I have tried to get you a clerkship saying that even had you been drunk, a place in some good office would keep you straight; but the Governor is very strict and if you hope to enter the service at any time you must take good care by working in one place and doing your best, to give no occasion for evil talk. If you have not been intoxicated at any time you can easily prove it.<sup>192</sup>

In this message Greene attempts to paint himself as a passive observer while simultaneously blaming Kumalo for his own accusation. He insists that he worked as Kumalo's advocate, even if offering the most tepid support to the beleaguered *kholwa*. Inexplicably, Greene insists that if Kumalo were not *actually* drunk, then he could easily prove otherwise, a logical contortion that

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

must have puzzled Kumalo as certainly as it baffles contemporary historians. However, the fundamental difference between Kumalo's and Stransham's cases is revealed in Greene's letter. Greene asserts that "even had you been drunk, a place in some good office would keep you straight," a perfectly apt description of official views to the Stransham affair. Yet unlike Stransham, Kumalo was never allowed the benefit of being 'kept straight,' and immediately denied employment. The idea that a black man could possibly drink and gain government employment appeared to the colonial establishment to be an unacceptable breaching of raced boundaries around consumption.

Ultimately, colonial officials viewed Kumalo as inherently prone to drunkenness, and not deserving of the numerous opportunities afforded to men like Devon Stransham a few years earlier. Natal's settlers worked specifically to deny African drinking in order to maintain a white monopoly over a form of socialization as well as to discourage a potential hindrance to African labor. Kumalo's experiences illustrate the lived experience of Natal's nonwhite subjects as a result of the legislative alcohol debates in the late nineteenth century. Kumalo's story reveals the myriad difficulties that Africans wishing to work within Natal's white dominated society had to navigate.

In October of 1888, while debates over Indian and African drinking took place in the Legislative Assembly, Durban attorney Samuel Rowse sent a lengthy petition to the Arthur Havelock, then Governor of Natal. The letter specifically asked for the commutation of a death sentence that had been meted out to two Indian men, Mootosamy and Apparoo, convicted of the rape of Subjan, an Indian woman. The petition, which was signed by several of the jury members on the case, sought to review the evidence of the case and question the culpability of

the men involved. The case, and its subsequent petitioning, demonstrate the power of raced and gendered hierarchies within colonial Natal, particularly in relation to alcohol access, which as I have demonstrated, provided a critical means of understanding the abstract nature of colonial citizenship and inclusion.

Mootosamy and Apparoo were convicted by a jury in October of 1888 of having raped Subjan on a deserted native footpath as they were all returning home from a day at the races near Umzinto village, a coastal community about forty miles south of Durban, known for its sugar production. In her testimony, Subjan asserted that three months earlier she had been walking home alone along the deserted shortcut, where she noticed two men and two boys were following her. Subjan asserted that Mootosamy (whom she recognized) and Apparoo (whom she did not) dragged her into the grass, robbed her of her jewelry, and pinned her down, each man assaulting her multiple times. This assertion was supported by the evidence of the two young Indian boys also on the road, who did not witness the rape itself but could testify to the dragging into the grass and the larger aspects of the assault. As the attorney for Mootosamy and Apparoo, Steven Rowse worked to undo the damaging impact of such evidence, and sought resolutely to discredit Subjan as a witness primarily by attacking her along raced and gendered lines—all around her use of alcohol.

In order to win reprieve for his clients, Rowse sought to undermine Subjan's authority as a witness—and her legitimacy as a victim—by referencing her purported alcohol consumption. “Upon cross examination, witness admitted that she had taken one glass of rum at the races but denied that she was drunk,” Rowse asserted bluntly. He did, however have to reluctantly admit that, “all the witnesses for the crown, although pressed upon this point, persisted in affirming that

the woman did not appear to be worse for liquor.” Yet Rowse had already begun to indirectly contend that Subjan’s alleged rape was actually *her* responsibility, a direct result of her moral permissiveness through the consumption of alcohol. In recounting the details of the trial, Rowse worked to posit an alternate reading of the events on that brutal July evening, one that placed the blame squarely upon Subjan’s implied immorality:

there was nothing in the Evidence of these witnesses as given at the trial inconsistent with the theory that complainant was drunk and was found lying about on the public Road in a position to her safety if not removed, and that the Prisoners, one of whom (Mootosamy) had been intimately acquainted with her, endeavoured to remove her off the road—that she became restive as inebriated persons usually do, and that they made frequent attempts to get her along the road.<sup>193</sup>

In Rowse’s retelling, Mootosamy and Apparoo neither raped nor stole; rather, they offered assistance to a drunk woman by the side of the road, whose own indiscretions had placed her at inordinate personal risk.

Having undermined Subjan’s reputation by alleging that she was a drunkard and therefore morally suspect, Rowse then moved to deny the legitimacy her status as a victim of assault. By painting a picture of Subjan not as an innocent victim who had been assailed on her way home after only consuming a legally allowed glass of rum, but rather as a drunken, wanton woman wandering shameless without the protection or propriety of her husband, Rowse sought to completely undercut the idea that she had been raped at all. Indeed, by emphasizing her solitary status as well as her public drinking, Rowse could then argue “there is no doubt complainant is a woman of notoriously immoral character.”<sup>194</sup> By wandering freely without sanction and in contravention of what proper behavior should be for an Indian woman, Subjan, in Rowse’s words, had invited her own assault, if such an assault had even existed. Having demolished her

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<sup>193</sup> PAR, CSO 1200 4670/1888

<sup>194</sup> Ibid

character, Rowse then insisted that it was “physically impossible for the prisoners to have effected their purpose” as Subjan had claimed. Rather, for Rowse, “there was no evidence (beyond the statement of the woman herself) which proved conclusively that, assuming both or either of the prisoners to have had connection with complainant it was *without her consent*.”<sup>195</sup> It is at this point that Rowse’s argument finally comes to fruition: Subjan could not have been raped because she was most likely drunk. If she was not drunk, in Rowse’s words, her drinking and her lack of male accompaniment demonstrates her immoral behavior, which means that her body itself was not effectively virtuous to resist male advances. Rowse’s gambit was ultimately successful as Havelock was convinced by this gendered reasoning by way of alcohol; he commuted the sentence as requested.

Stories like Subjan’s routinely demonstrate the predominant gendered assumptions that operated around day-to-day experiences of alcohol consumption in Natal. In 1890, *The Natal Advertiser* reported on a ‘Nasty Case’ involving settler men, native women, and presumptions both about alcohol, race, and gender. Two European men, a Mr. H. Phillips and R. Williams, were charged in September with supplying liquor to two young Native women. One of the women, Nmatu, reported that the men had ‘enticed’ her and her friend Topsy away to a remote beach near Durban “where they gave them drink—the one from a bottle of gin, and the other from a bottle of pontac.”<sup>196</sup> However, it appeared that Williams and Phillips did not simply plan for a late night tittle. Nmatu claimed “the men then caught hold of them and they called out, after which the police came and arrested the four of them.” It would appear from this brief incident in the paper that the two men assumed that alcohol consumption for women implied a

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid

<sup>196</sup> “A Nasty Case,” *The Natal Advertiser*, September 24, 1890.

loose and easy sexuality. Settler discourse asserted that African women drinking publicly, much like Indian women, demonstrated a particular lack of moral fiber. While generally, African men were seen as lacking the proper (white) masculine value of self-control around spirits, African women were then rendered promiscuous and easily accessible for white desires. The news report suggests that the sexualized interactions between the European men and Zulu women were distinctly nonconsensual, as the women subsequently cried out and attracted police attention.

In this instance, alcohol consumption maps directly onto the day-to-day raced and gendered realities of settler colonialism in Natal. The *Advertiser* reported that when Nmatu and Topsy cried out the first person to respond was a native policeman, who came upon the two men “holding on by the girls.” Immediately Williams and Phillips sought not to apologize or confess to the officer, but rather to offer him liquor in hope of winning him over. In this instance the two European men attempted to use their exclusive privilege to alcohol as a means of purchasing favor with a Zulu man who was legally barred from consumption. In so doing, the men may have hoped to build a masculine alliance across racial inequalities in order to prevent discipline for their actions against Nmatu and Topsy. The nameless constable, however, was not convinced, and soon other policemen joined the group on the beach. The two women were fined 10s for breaking African curfew laws, but the men were fined £5 each. While the attendant judge expressed revulsion, claiming “he had never heard a nastier case,” the two men were tried not for attempted rape or for any potential violence toward the native women, but rather for serving Africans alcohol and thereby breaking laws of racial distinction. The stories of Subjan, Nmatu, and Topsy illustrate the gendered as well as raced nature of alcohol consumption in the late nineteenth century. In particular, aggressive, invasive displays masculinity could be expressed as legitimate in the face of a debased female morality compromised by alcohol

consumption. Cases like those of Kumalo, Subjan, Topsy, and Nmatu provide us with rare ‘on the ground’ views of lived experience under Natal’s alcohol laws. Additionally, instances like these, reported in popular colonial newspapers and sent in reports between colonial officials, would have informed and helped shape the rhetoric of settler legislators as they passed laws governing alcohol consumption, particularly the major reorganization of liquor law that took place in 1890. Yet at the same time that Indians and Africans found their liquor and *utshwala* rights under attack, white settlers too found themselves increasingly restricted in their alcohol consumption as legislators debated legal restrictions on drink, steeped in the rhetoric of moral fitness yet again.

By the early 1890s, white men who repeatedly fell to the enticements of alcohol had begun to attract pity and sympathy in official circles, instead as being seen as mere moral failures. While debating an Inebriates’ Bill in 1894, Henry Bale attempted to humanize white male examples of alcoholic behavior. Standing before Parliament, Bale argued that he had knew a professional colonist, who, if he were not incapable of avoiding drink, “would have been an ornament to society and a useful member of the community.” This man had asked to be put into prison in order to prevent him from drinking further. The request was refused, and the man died impoverished in the streets. Reflecting on the fate of the unnamed colonist and other men like him, Bale continued:

I suppose that this man's will, like the will of so many others under similar circumstances, was enervated, that he was unable to control himself, that he had lost to a large extent one of the attributes of his manhood--the power of self-control.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--First Parliament, from April 25 to July 11, 1894*, vol. XXII (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1894), 541.

Bale's argument in favor of quarantine over criminalization for alcoholism, however, does *not* signal a change in the raced or gendered assumptions that supported attempts to legally control alcohol consumption in Natal. Rather, Bale *upholds* such formulations through his calls for legal reform. By situating the unfortunate colonist's failing as losing an attribute of his manhood, Bale illustrated the performative and contingent nature of race and masculinity in colonial Natal. If alcohol was a privilege specifically reserved for the enjoyment of whites (and ideally men) who possessed a monopoly over full social inclusion within a settler colony, then alcoholism itself belied the limits of settlement—it was a visceral example of presumed white male superiority in colonial society. More importantly, this rhetoric privileges self-control, a trait presented as unique to white settlers (indeed, the lack of self-control factored highly into debates over why Africans and Indians should be restricted from drinking).

A year later, Bale continued his drive for leniency, advocating the establishment of settler 'retreats' (which naturally, would only be for European men, as non-whites were seen as inherently degenerate and fundamentally lacking the self-control such facilities could provide). Speaking specifically about the needs of white settler men, Bale continued:

[A] drunkard is a curse to his home, a curse to his wife, and a curse to his children, who are influenced not only by his bad example but are brought to beggary and degradation. If, however, that man is confined... it is possible that after his restoration he will be able to fulfill his duties as a husband and a father.<sup>198</sup>

Bale's speech underscored the stakes of both the settler project and the potential disarray that alcoholism offered to the monopoly over legitimacy and occupation that the settler state attempted to assert. In these formulations, the destructiveness of anti-social drinking rendered settler men incapable of filling their 'duties' as husband and father, which were to produce

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<sup>198</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal: Third Session--First Parliament, from April 25 to August 9, 1895*, vol. XXIII (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1895), 562.

hierarchies of order and control as well as *reproduce* white settler populations in a colony where indigenous peoples outnumbered them eight to one. White alcoholics ran the risk of ‘degradation,’ a critical problem in a society that depended upon racial hierarchy.

Despite the beginning shifts in views of alcoholism, white self-control over alcohol consumption remained tightly linked to notions of respectability and proper claims to rule in Natal. The racialized component of alcohol as a preserve of white settler enjoyment often served to counter manifestations of the global temperance movement in Natal. While drunkenness was problematic and alcohol a potential vice, the ability to drink served as a racialized marker of distinction that white settlers, particularly moderate drinking men, were reluctant to give relinquish. As early as 1881 settlers adamantly protested proposed temperance laws that restricted access to drink and instead offered ‘wholesome’ entertainments aimed at young white men, arguing:

It does not, of course, matter whether young men play billiards and drink or not, so long as they commit no excesses. There is nothing whatever abstractly vicious in either billiards or wine. All reasonable and reasoning people are agreed upon that point...Nobody disputes the fact that a man who gets drunk makes a beast of himself, albeit often a very ludicrous one...But shall we reclaim them or stop drinking and gambling by establishing teetotal saloons and reading rooms? We think not.<sup>199</sup>

The specific rhetoric deployed throughout the 1880s and 1890s by many settlers marshaled a sense of white masculinity as constituted by moderation and restraint, rendering further restrictions infantilizing, humiliating, and unnecessary.

Likewise, hundreds of petitioners wrote to protest the Natal Parliament’s temperance-minded attempts to strengthen the Liquor Laws of 1896. The petitioners angrily alleged that:

While the majority of the people of this colony are not what is known as total abstainers, they are temperate and the present Bill is an uncalled for imputation on their character in that its provisions are likely to create an impression in the minds of those who have not the chance of judging for themselves that a very considerable section of the colonists are

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<sup>199</sup> *The Natal Witness*, August 19, 1881.

addicted to excessive drinking and incapable of exercising the self-control which is exercised by the members of all civilized and intelligent communities.<sup>200</sup>

Critically, these petitioners make it known that they are not abstainers, but they are self-regulating drinkers. Calling upon a perceived restraint in regards to their drinking, they marshaled a sense of victimization at the wide-ranging proposed changes to Natal's alcohol laws. They interpreted these broad changes as a belief in their inability to maintain sobriety, which served, in effect, to mark their failure to exercise appropriate control over Natal. Bristling at such language, the petitioners insisted that if excessive drinking did prevail among whites it was only in rare cases and did not "in any way justify the branding of the whole community as drunkards."<sup>201</sup> While white community members took pains to show that they could use alcohol responsibly, very few settlers would acknowledge using that other major intoxicant—cannabis. Repeating rhetoric of indigenous and Indian lack of industry, settlers constructed cannabis consumption as an indicator of inherent idleness and a strictly nonwhite, antisocial activity.

### **Dark Smoke: The Racialized Specter of Cannabis Smoking in Natal**

In contrast to alcohol consumption, Natal's settlers did not initially view cannabis as a significant problem. Indeed, the 'Young Natal' letter in *The Witness* had only made glancing reference to Africans smoking *dagga*, positioning it as an analogue to the white man's tobacco. In the early years of the colony, settlers recognized the economic potential of hemp as an export agricultural product rather than for the threat of its psychoactive properties. Natal's settler population initially viewed cannabis as a semi-wild plant that could be grown (primarily through African and Indian labor) in order to suit their material needs as colonists. Over time, however, the recreational aspects of cannabis use in the form of marijuana smoking led to settlers to

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<sup>200</sup> CSO 1451 1891/3362, 1891/2453, 1891/4309

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

reclassify it as a socially aberrant intoxicant that created improper forms of sociability and disrupted the labor roles they desired for Africans and Indians.

Marijuana had already had a lengthy history in southern Africa by the time that Natal's settlers attempted to grapple with the 'problem' of its consumption. Scholars have claimed that cannabis reached Africa by the twelfth century and eventually reached southern Africa considerably before European arrival.<sup>202</sup> Early Dutch reports described Africans smoking cannabis and tobacco as early as 1705 in the Cape, and marijuana was already known to Zulus, who called the plant *isangu*.<sup>203</sup> By the 1860s, soon after the arrival of Indian immigrants to Natal, the first descriptions of 'dakka' began to appear in settler papers. Cannabis (in the form of hemp production) appeared to first reach the attention of Natal's settlers in the late 1860s as they frantically began to cast about looking for profitable agricultural ventures. Coffee and cotton had both been attempted with very little success in the continent, and sugar was still only beginning to be effectively established in Natal. An 1868 column in *The Natal Witness* made the case for the planting of hemp as a useful cash crop. Forwarding information from the Cape Colony, the *Witness* article instructed readers that cannabis, otherwise known as Indian hemp or 'dakka,' is not merely a local weed to be smoked by the indigenous population. Rather, the valuable hemp plant, from which rope and other products can be made:

is not even another variety, but one and the same plant....The vigorous way in which this plant grows all over the colony, even in drought, adds one more evidence to the fact that our resource, when developed by a larger population, will be almost unlimited.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Martin Booth, *Cannabis: A History* (London: Doubleday, 2003), 43–44; Paterson, "Prohibition and Resistance," 19–25.

<sup>203</sup> Linguists have traced the path of the South Asian word 'bhang' through East African 'bangi' and eventually its transmutation into Zulu 'isangu.' See: du Toit, "Dagga."

<sup>204</sup> "The Benefits of Hemp," *The Natal Witness*, April 21, 1868.

It is a fascinating and telling moment that the first instance of cannabis discussion in *The Witness* discusses strategies for rendering a plant known for its use among indigenous peoples as a means of establishing white settler economic security. The article attempted to transform the ostensibly ‘native’ weed<sup>205</sup> into an opportunity to be developed once the settler fantasy of white population transfer has occurred. In short, the introduction and establishment of a white majority population would allow this Indian/indigenous weed to be converted into a proper and ordered colonial export—hempen rope—that would benefit both Natal and the empire in general.

Indeed, it would appear that the colonial establishment took these instructions to heart. Musing on the apparent departure of Lieutenant Governor Keane in 1870<sup>206</sup>, a *Witness* correspondent reported that Keane had set aside a significant portion of land in the colony for the cultivation of Indian hemp. With mock horror, the author opined, “To what use he intends to apply the fibre which this plant contains we are at a loss to imagine. We shudder to think of its possible application. Is it intended to make a rope to hang the editor of the *Witness*?” It is particularly intriguing to note that the *Witness* author only hints that Keane would use the *fiber* of the plant, and not its psychoactive properties. Such an editorial reinforces the idea that for white settlers, the idea of smoking the plant, of engaging in its recreational properties, was unthinkable for ‘proper’ society.<sup>207</sup> Throughout the 1870s the only references to cannabis in newspapers and

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<sup>205</sup> *Cannabis sativa* is, of course, native to South Asia albeit long resident in South Africa, which complicates the claims to semi-indigeneity and white practice yet again along Indian lines, a familiar issue in Natal.

<sup>206</sup> The *Witness* author may be in error, as Keane did not officially leave until 1872 before taking up his final position as Governor of the Gold Coast the following year.

<sup>207</sup> While some historians argue that cannabis’ psychoactive properties were relatively unknown by the majority of Britons in the mid nineteenth century, the work of doctors like William O’Shaughnessy in Calcutta and London as was widespread in scientific journals, and many British colonists would have heard of hemp smoking through Indian colonization. See James H. Mills, *Cannabis Britannica: Empire, Trade, and Prohibition 1800-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

government documents are about either potential white settler cultivation of the crop or about the dangerous of non-white recreational smoking.

Yet at the same time that white settler society moved to potentially ‘domesticate’ hemp for its own economic imperatives, the colonial government made initial overtures to delimit Indian access to the plant for recreational purposes. As part of a larger legislation on Indian immigration in 1870, the Natal Legislative Council passed a subsection that gave the colony’s governor power to pass any law:

prohibiting the smoking, use, or possession by, and the sale, barter, gift to, any coolies whatsoever, of any portion of the hemp plant (*cannabis sativa*), and authorizing the destruction thereof, if found in such use or possession, and imposing penalties upon coolies using, cultivating, or possessing such plant for the purpose of smoking the same.<sup>208</sup>

It appears that this legal permission was not actively pursued by Natal’s governor throughout the 1870s, although it became a point of discussion in the following decade, as the state grew stronger and settlers felt more emboldened to use its legal apparatuses to secure labor on terms they found amenable. The legal reservation created in the 1870 law is telling of the ambiguous status of cannabis in the colony at this point; the plant was seen as a potentially vital economic crop but also a source of behavioral disorder.

While initial newspaper discussions of cannabis seemed primarily to document the economic potential for hemp production, missionaries living among the Zulu offered other, less positive descriptions of the plant. The American missionary Lewis Grout reported in 1865 that Zulu men were inordinately fond of smoking *isangu* (cannabis) from pipes, an act which “has something of a social though most degrading influence” where smokers were quickly

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<sup>208</sup> Section 70 of Law 2 of 1870, cited in “1887 Indian Commission (Wragg Commission),” *Government Gazette* vol. XXXIX, no. No. 2262 (September 20, 1887): 6–7.

“overcome, stupefied, intoxicated, maddened by the narcotic fumes.”<sup>209</sup> Alerting his readers to the ostensible dangers of hemp smoking, Grout described the intoxicating effects of marijuana as maddening, dangerous, and directly counter to notions of industry, productivity, and order.

Grout’s report presages colonial views of cannabis that would come to predominate in discussions after the Anglo Zulu War. In particular, he asserts that

The habit of smoking the *igudu* [pipe], though most destructive to mind and body, once formed, is followed with great pertinacity. The subject of it, lost to self-control and all good influences, neglects his business and becomes the slave of his besotting horn<sup>210</sup>.

Grout’s report emphasizes African susceptibility to ostensible addiction to smoking cannabis. Such a discursive rendering of African susceptibility to intoxication maps onto contemporary depictions of African tendencies toward drunkenness.

It is not a coincidence that the first time anti-marijuana legislation appears in Natal’s record books, it is in relationship to labor. The first restrictions on cannabis were applied to Indian immigrants in part of the larger Law 2, 1870, a massive piece of legislation designed to overhaul and systematize Indian indentured labor in the colony. The law regulated everything from payment to housing to medical fees, and in its own way, then, offered a form of racial sorting. By 1870, less than a decade after the introduction of Indian indentured labor, settler legislators already attempted to mark cannabis smoking as a form of racialized and improper sociability for potential workers.

The post-1880 years would bring invigorated attempts by Natal’s settlers to secure labor discipline, as they utilized race and masculinity to justify marking Africans and Indians as lacking self-control and morally suspect for engaging in cannabis consumption. As the

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<sup>209</sup> Lewis Grout, *Zulu-Land Or, Life Among the Zulu-Kafirs of Natal and Zulu-Land, South Africa* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Committee, 1864), 109.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

nineteenth century progressed, settler legislators, newspaper writers, and missionaries would coalesce around the ‘issue’ of cannabis, marking it as anti-social, aberrant, and fundamentally irreconcilable with proper, respectable white society. In the early years of Natal, settler society viewed cannabis as an omnipresent weed that could possibly be harnessed for hemp; by the 1880s, it would be specifically marked as a threat to security and society.

As the 1880s dawned, Natal’s elites became increasingly concerned about the anti-social implications of cannabis smoking. The idea of hemp as a useful economic export faded from newspaper headlines, and warnings of criminality and violence associated with the drug began to take its place. Settler papers, missionaries, and politicians increasingly linked Africans and Indians to potential criminality in relation to *dagga* smoking. An 1881 report in the *Natal Witness* indicates the new level of concern that settlers were beginning to feel towards marijuana consumption:

It is well-known that the smoking of hemp--called *dakka* by the natives, and *bhang* by the Indians--is a custom very detrimental to health, but the natives will persist in making use of the weed, despite warnings and the law. The case of Durriga, an Indian, brought before the City Resident Magistrate yesterday morning, is an instance in point. This man ... is an inveterate smoker of hemp so much so that his mind is affected by the continual use of the weed...[T]wo-thirds of the cases of madness [are] traced to the use of bhang, and His Worship said he remembered that some years ago a Kafir committed murder through smoking *dakka*. Durriga was sent to gaol for 10 days, with hard labour.<sup>211</sup>

The announcement represents hemp smoking as solely African and Indian practice. Hemp smoking is introduced to Natal’s ostensibly white reading public as a new topic, and as a pernicious habit carried on in violation of settler law. Further, the article describes an ‘insane’ Indian man and vaguely references an African murderer—both are attributed to *dagga* use, and are examples of non-white disorder.

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<sup>211</sup> “The Use of Hemp as a Smoking Mixture,” *The Natal Witness*, August 18, 1881.

Natal legislators sparred over the possibility of limiting African access to marijuana during a particularly lively debate in the midst of the Pietermaritzburg town council in 1881. A letter from the Colonial Secretary was circulated, asking for assistance in curbing African smoking of hemp. When one member, a Mr. Williams, suggested that smoking *dagga* might prove beneficial for the African population, a Mr. Mackillican fired back that Williams appeared to be under the influence of cannabis himself to make such a scandalous suggestion. After a few momentary insults, the council regretfully concluded that they had no ability to limit the production of a product that grew freely across the colony without imperial assistance or sanction, although they proposed confiscating any and all African pipes upon entering or exiting the city.<sup>212</sup> The exchange itself indicates, however, that the idea of white smoking of *dagga* was simply not considered to be a real option. Marijuana's greatest challenge appeared to be its supposed *ubiquity*; to a white settler minority that sought to control and dominate Natal's land and labor, *cannabis sativa* demonstrated both an unchecked natural threat and a potential means of disrupting the productivity of the Indian and African laborers upon whom they depended.

The very prevalence of cannabis plants around Natal, earnestly advised by optimistic colonists fifteen years earlier, posed a threat to settler order. A series of exchanges between colonial authorities and the Pietermaritzburg town council reveal settler fears over their inability to discipline African smokers of cannabis. These fears are particularly significant as they demonstrate the limits of settler hegemony over the land and peoples of Natal, despite their frequent claims to the contrary.

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<sup>212</sup> "Town Council," *The Natal Witness*, February 21, 1881.

The debate began in November of 1880 when George Kershaw, the mayor of Pietermaritzburg, wrote to the Attorney General asking if the city had the power “to prohibit the growth, sale, or use of this weed within the Borough.” In a series of dispatches between various levels of colonial service, the Attorney General, Secretary for Native Affairs, and even the Colonial Secretary all offered advice. The ultimate conclusion was rather grim: not only did the town council lack the ability to effectively ban the cultivation and use of *dagga*, the plant was far too abundant to even consider limiting legally. As one administrator pointed out, “it is a plant that grows almost anywhere, self-sown and without the slightest attention being paid to it.”<sup>213</sup> In effect, cultivation was unnecessary for anyone who wished to procure the plant; all one had to do was to pull some of the weed growing wild upon the roadside. The colony simply did not have the power to enforce a ban to any effective result.

In the rhetoric of Natal’s settlers, marijuana was a pernicious plant that did grave injury to African and Indian workers and threatened their economic and even social stability. The Pietermaritzburg petition to the colonial government specifically couched the marijuana elimination request in terms of fear for African health and safety, a rhetorical move reminiscent of anti-black alcohol concerns. Like alcohol, marijuana use was viewed as a dangerous habit made more possible by native (and Indian) moral susceptibility; William Moreland, Natal’s Surveyor General, insisted that African *dagga* smokers were trapped in “the thrall of their naturally wild imaginations” and in need of “the control of understanding” that white settlers

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<sup>213</sup> “The Police Committee,” *The Natal Witness*, November 6, 1880.

themselves possessed.<sup>214</sup> Yet settler avowals of moral concern competed with official recognition of the state's limits.

The *Natal Witness* regularly featured news reports on the criminal acts committed by Africans and Indians under the influence of marijuana. Readers of the *Witness* in 1883-84 would have read of multiple attempted assaults committed by Indian and African men against white women that were then blamed on the influence of *dagga* smoking. In 1884 a case of an Indian worker roughly handling and then attempting to rape a farmer's wife ran through several issues of the *Witness*. In the case, Muttai, an Indian worker, apparently rudely shoved and followed the farmer's wife into the house, attempting assault before being stopped by an African servant.<sup>215</sup> Muttai claimed to have been acting under the influence of *dagga* smoking, and the overall event seemed to confirm the worst of white fears about the ubiquity of the weed and the vast numbers of nonwhite people that surrounded them. Hemp, like the Indian and African workers of Natal, theoretically existed to aid European settlers, but they had dangerous and darker implications. Muttai's assault can also be read as a form of resistance to colonial power especially as it appeared to take place when the farmer himself was absent from the farm. In this instance, the 'wildness' of the ever-present hemp and the servants seem to overlap in the reported case.

Another marijuana-related crime case in 1883 illustrates intersections of access, intoxication and power. In this instance, an African servant in the employ of the Vermaak family for years surprised his employers by dragging the octogenarian and bedridden Mrs. Vermaak from her bed and threatening to either kill or rape her if he were not given something to drink. The unnamed attacker was found and restrained by members of the Vermaak family, but he

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<sup>214</sup> Moreland to Mitchell in PAR CSO 783 1880/4843

<sup>215</sup> "The Outrage by a Coolie," *The Natal Witness*, March 18, 1884.

claimed to have no memory of the event, having acted under the influence of marijuana.<sup>216</sup> The Vermaak family event is interesting in that it not only shows master/servant intimacies gone horribly awry (from the family's perspective), but that the assailant claimed his attack occurred *because of marijuana and resulted* in a demand for liquor. While marijuana could not be banned, alcohol certainly was, and the drug itself became a convenient explanation for both the violent behavior and for the fears of dominating a numerous population.

To settlers, alcohol consumption was a white monopoly derived through inherent moral legitimacy that required policing both within and outside of white society. In contrast, hemp was a wild plant that could be domesticated for settler needs but more frequently was used against settler desires, resulting in chaos, disorder and immense violence—fears that very easily mapped onto the Indian and African populations that outnumbered settlers. Marijuana had the potential to destabilize the proper, racialized relationship between masters and servants, as the multiple assaults in the 1880s appeared to indicate. In these instances, however, it seems rather convenient to blame marijuana use for the disruptive challenges to power dynamics imposed by settlers. In 1880, an Indian servant of a Mr. W. F. Stanton decided to desert his employer—but not before brandishing knives at everyone at the residence. The *Witness* reporter was quick to assert that the incident took place as he “had been smoking Indian hemp to such an extent that he was temporarily insane, and would have done any rash deed.”<sup>217</sup> Marijuana use could offer an immediate explanation for behavior that otherwise seemed aberrant and puzzling to settlers—why else would Indians and Africans be so ungrateful and thoughtless as to disregard their

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<sup>216</sup> “Outrage at the Noodsberg,” *The Natal Witness*, August 3, 1883.

<sup>217</sup> “A Nice Sort of Servant,” *The Natal Witness*, March 11, 1880.

contracts of service? Smoking *dagga* offered a convenient scapegoat at the same time that it raised a frightening image of non-white disorder and potential violence.

By the mid-1880s, marijuana consumption had come to represent several attendant anxieties of the settler project in Natal. It represented a fundamental lack of control by whites over both labor and lands that they desired to exercise full dominion over; it also could provide a convenient excuse for African and Indian dissent with settler labor regimes. Additionally, colonial officials began to pronounce the pernicious effects of marijuana smoking on the bodies of its users, described almost exclusively as African and Indian males. An 1882 report by the Protector for Indian Immigrants first suggested legally limiting Indian marijuana consumption by using the provision detailed in the original 1870 law; further calls came from medical professionals throughout the decade. An official commission into the state of Indian immigration and labor conditions resulted in the two year reports of the Wragg Commission, named after Natal Justice Thomas Wragg, who headed the inquiry. One of the chief findings of the Wragg Commission was the seriousness threat (in settler eyes) of *dagga* smoking, which resulted in absenteeism, violence, and instability in the labor force.

The Wragg Commission immediately constructed Indian marijuana use in gendered as well as raced terms. The Commission argued that the particular effects of *dagga* on Indian men were well known:

Employers have been familiar, for many years, with the evils consequent upon its use by their Indian servants: they, the Medical Officers of Circles, and the Protector of Immigrants, have seen many Indians with their strength and manhood wrecked by the pernicious drug.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> “Wragg Commission of 1887,” 6.

Echoing the earlier equation of manhood with self-control in regard to alcohol, the Wragg Commission asserts that marijuana use robs Indian men of this inherent masculine quality. In effect, marijuana use alters them by removing the disciplined, discerning aspects of their character, leaving in its place savage brutes whose masculine energies are unchecked. The resultant Indian marijuana smoker is both *emasculated* by his loss of reason, but also hyper-sexualized and presents a danger in both violence and potential sexual assault to women.

The Wragg Commission suggested that the potential powers denoted in Law 2 of 1870 be activated immediately, making hemp smoking illegal. Although the previous decade had indicated clearly that this was an unenforceable measure due to both the ubiquity of the plant and the lack of official coercive measures, the commission insisted that the ‘knowledge’ of such illegality would serve to check the most immoderate uses. In order to justify their attempts legislate away marijuana consumption, the Wragg Commission pointed to similar acts passed in British Guiana, Trinidad, and Mauritius. In each of these colonies, places where Indians were transported as migrant laborers and established themselves as arrivant settlers, marijuana smokers were subject to state disciplinary measures to ensure that labor productivity would not be interrupted by a passion for *dagga*, *ganja*, or *bhang*. Peevishly, the Wragg Commission noted that Indian laborers actively disobeyed the desires of Natal’s settlers by engaging in marijuana use, noting that perfectly ‘acceptable’ options were available that were less disruptive to their economic demands:

We see no just reason why the Indian Immigrant should not be content to consume tobacco, and to forego the use of a plant which is highly injurious to his constitution, and which disables him from fulfilling the contract for which he was brought to the Colony.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

Ultimately, the Commission's legal recommendations stated that Indian marijuana use was not merely unmanly and threatening, but that it created disruptions in labor that ran counter to the desires of Natal's employers:

We are satisfied, from the documentary and oral evidence before us, (a) that the smoking of hemp, whether by itself or in the mixture to which we have referred, is detrimental to the health of Indian Immigrants in this Colony, (b) that the immoderate use of it is highly injurious, (c) that the habit of smoking it in excess is widespread, in the Pietermaritzburg circle, one-fifth, probably, of the Indian population smoking it in excess, (d) that such immoderate use leads to crime of the most serious nature, (e) that it renders the Indian Immigrant unfit and unable to perform, with satisfaction to the employer, that work for which he was specially brought to this Colony.<sup>220</sup>

While health and morality were used as rhetorical feints in the Commission, indeed echoing some of the earlier scares of the 1880s, the connection between legal declaration and economic compulsion lay at the heart of the matter. The final point, that Indian smoking of cannabis was detrimental to the success of labor procurement, explicitly states the central preoccupation was economic. The moralizing language and recurrent fears visible in Natal's print culture discourses crystallized in these much more significant questions over hierarchies of control and labor. Thus, cannabis smoking became a form of race-coding that distinguishes improper (and nonproductive) sociability that disrupted lines of settler desire.

In a strange reversal of prevailing rhetoric surrounding Indian and African alcohol consumption, the Wragg report pinned some of the responsibility for the disorderly business of Indian *dagga* smoking on African complicity. In this formulation Africans are actually blamed for the 'degradation' of the exogenous other; the Indian is seen as being brought down from a state of potential usefulness to settler society through indigenous collusion.

We have reason to think that much hemp is sold to Indians by Kaffirs and storekeepers; we are aware that, in some parts of the Colony, white traders purchase green hemp leaves from Kaffir growers and retail them, in a dried state, to any customer who applies for them. As we are strongly convinced that the smoking of hemp is as baneful to the Kaffir

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<sup>220</sup> "Wragg Commission of 1887," 6–7.

as to the Indian, we consider that it is our duty to suggest that chemists, holding special licenses subject to stamp duty, should be the only persons allowed by law to sell any portion of the hemp plant, whether wild or cultivated, to any person whomsoever, whether or white, Kaffir, or Indian descent.<sup>221</sup>

Aside from the potential of an unscrupulous white ‘storekeeper,’ the Wragg report reinforces the relative invisibility of white marijuana use. *Dagga* smoking is confined to the aberrant, anti-social preserves of non-whites, and in the process, white marijuana smoking is rendered unspeakable. This rhetorical turn explains some of the potentially damaging force behind the exchange in the Pietermaritzburg Town Council where Mr. Williams was accused of himself having smoked *dagga* for sympathizing with African use. In addition, like alcohol, marijuana is then positioned as a dividing line between appropriate and unacceptable forms of racialized sociability. In such a positioning, unscrupulous storekeepers take the same position as ‘mean whites’ and traitorous barmen in breaking raced lines of consumption and in turn threatening hierarchies that support settler hegemony in the colony. Unlike alcohol, marijuana use is never spoken of as a potential hazard for the body of the white settler. Instead, all references to white smoking of cannabis are speculative, as in the case of Mr. Williams. Such invisibility in colonial documents is interesting; either white settlers never smoked cannabis or the larger presumption among legislators and newspaper writers was that the plant was solely for African and Indian consumption.

Unlike the metropole, where marijuana use was not banned until 1928 (and even then somewhat unwillingly by legislators), Natal succeeded in establishing anti-marijuana restrictions far earlier. Even in India, where cannabis use was reportedly far more widespread, officials failed to pass restrictive legislation against cannabis in this period. After lengthy debates and an

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

investigation by the India Hemp Drugs Commission in the early 1890, the colonial government in India ultimately decided that marijuana in moderate use did not produce much harm and should be allowed.<sup>222</sup> Yet this was not the case in Natal; ultimately, the demands of coercing African and Indian labor as well as the need to differentiate appropriate and inappropriate forms of sociability led to the passage of more restrictive legislation in order to defend the racial hierarchies upon which the colony depended.

It was in this atmosphere of settler self-policing and non-white moral condemnation that South African student Charles Bourhill produced a comprehensive thesis for his medical degree at the University of Edinburgh shortly before the First World War. Titled “The Smoking of Dagga (Indian Hemp) among the Native Races of South Africa, and the Resultant Evils,” Bourhill’s thesis substantially shaped South African marijuana policies throughout the apartheid era.<sup>223</sup> Although Bourhill’s work took place after Natal’s federation into the Union of South Africa and a host of other social changes, considerable continuity remains in the attitudes conveyed in Bourhill’s research and the opinions evidenced previously by Natal settlers both in the Wragg Commission and newspaper reports.

Bourhill began by arguing that nearly all *dagga* smokers among the Zulus *must* be male, based on his firsthand observations and secondhand reports that Zulu women did not readily participate. He inexplicably reasoned that only about three percent of women must be smokers—and those either prostitutes or women of low moral character.<sup>224</sup> It was with this presumption of marijuana smoking that as a virtually male-only habit that Bourhill grounded his

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<sup>222</sup> Mills, *Cannabis Britannica*.

<sup>223</sup> Morris, “Weeding Out.”

<sup>224</sup> Charles J. G. Bourhill, “The Smoking of Dagga (Indian Hemp) Among the Native Races of South Africa and the Resultant Evils” (Doctor of Medicine, University of Edinburgh, 1913), 10–11.

work in studying whether or not African men were made more susceptible to sexual vice as a result of taking the drug. Refuting the idea that marijuana use led directly to sexual assault, Bourhill argued that “sane natives must exercise their faculties of self-control, and will power to restrain their rising desires; otherwise rape cases—black on black or black on white—would be more common.”<sup>225</sup> Such a formulation curiously echoes earlier proclamations of masculinist ‘self-control’ and ascribes a limited fashion of proper masculinity to Zulu men despite the potential moral degradation brought on by their smoking habits.

However, it is Bourhill’s description of African mental ability and the debilitating effects of marijuana use that get to the immediate heart of the matter regarding settlement, labor, and legitimacy:

Leave a raw savage in his primitive state, leading his own life, let him smoke dagga, when and how he pleases, and it will be found that little or no harm will result. But take a young adult native, with his stunted mental powers, ...let him become ambitious to copy the white man, and outshine his fellows. ...Now introduce the vices, Alcohol, Dagga, unnatural sexual practices, etc. what is the result? The interactions of environment and vice proves too much for many; and the feebler brains drop out of the fight – shattered and broken.<sup>226</sup>

For Bourhill, if Africans are left alone in their ‘raw’ and ‘primitive’ state, their social practices are acceptable; however, when forced into interaction with superior, complex European culture, Africans become susceptible to excessive mental and moral pressures. This assessment reinforces ideas of innate African moral and intellectual inferiority in comparison to settler society. Further, it presumes that the only ‘proper’ place for indigenous peoples in a settler society is one that reinforces their inferior status and consigns them to serving as laborers.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 10.

Despite the claims of newspaper editors, occasional moralizing by missionaries, and the repeated demands of legislators, Natal's legal restrictions on cannabis remained piecemeal and ineffective throughout the nineteenth century. Simply put, every acre of the colony could not be patrolled or monitored for hemp in the same way that alcohol consumption could potentially be checked. Unlike alcohol, the colonial state could not hope to ban a plant that grew in the wild, on native reserve lands, and in the garden plots of hundreds of laborers. Yet the failure of the colonial state to enact the immediacy of its hegemony should not take away from the actual work of the settler project; marijuana consumption, like alcohol use, provided a means of determining discursively and visibly, who the settler state imagined to be included properly in the imagined polity of Natal. Hemp smoking served to demarcate anti-social behavior that disrupted a readily supply of African and Indian labor for Natal's settlers. As a result, the government of Natal predated attempts by other countries around the globe to regulate marijuana consumption and enforce moral order by several decades. This is more than a merely an anecdote in a global history of drug regulation. Rather, like alcohol, cannabis served as a concrete example of the discourses of moral fitness and inclusion that typified Natal. As settlers sought to justify their claims to a highly contested territory occupied by a sizable indigenous population as well as arrivant settlers from India, they called upon the disorderly, frightening concept of *dagga* smoking to underline their claims to provide moral order for the colony.

## **Conclusion**

While print culture and legislative debates both indicate that the boundaries of respectable white settler masculinity that were threatened by intoxication, it was nativeness and Indianness that were legally classified in relationship to intoxicants. This leads to two critical

understandings about the creation and development of racialized distinctions in Natal around intoxicants. First, whiteness was not an a priori condition, but rather was aligned through sobriety through a process that resulted in more detailed racial categories around African and Indian bodies. The rhetoric that linked Africans to wider populations of vulnerable indigenous peoples throughout the Anglophone settler world, simultaneously bolstered settler claims to control over both government and spirits. Likewise, the constant debates over alcohol access not only underscored the liminal racial status of Indians within the colony, but the emergent 'crises' of white settler hegemony that would grip the colony in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Secondly, the debates over alcohol asylums and published accounts of disgraced settlers demonstrated that white sobriety (and all that such a condition signified) itself was not automatically or necessarily stabilized even by the law, but had to be perpetually guarded and defended. It is here that the limits of settlement are most apparent in colonial Natal. Just as the ostensible designations of 'civilized' from 'uncivilized' marriages revealed the profound fears over white settler futurity, so do the discursive and subsequent legal framing of civilization and alcohol reveal the vulnerability of settler claims to self-control and power. The inability of settler legislators to deny nonwhite access to intoxicants pointed simultaneously to their own tenuous hold over constructed hierarchies of difference. How powerful were settlers in Natal if their vaunted control was only one careless glass of brandy away from falling away, revealing them humiliated in the dust, like the hapless Martin Swindells?

## Chapter Four: The Mission Field: Civilizational Aspirations and the Politics of Transformation, 1850-1890

The mission field offered a space for Natal's settlers to enact a new normative order that re-positioned indigenous bodies and places in order to make them more amenable to colonial exploitation. Yet this space was anything but 'settled'; rather, it remained a site of contestation, negotiation, and (re)interpretation as converts, clergy and colonists sought to make claims of authority over shifting ground. Ultimately, missionaries sought to link the internal processes of Christian conversion to visible signs of acculturative change, namely the adoption of Western notions of clothing, domestic inhabitation, and family ties. These adoptions overlapped (but not completely) with the order that settlers themselves hoped to enact. As a result, the mission field simultaneously dictated heteronormative terms of inclusion yet also provided space for Africans to participate—unequally to be sure—in the 'conditions of possibility' that it offered.

By 'mission field,' I mean the broader bundle of concepts, aspirations, and activities that surrounded the work of Christian conversion in Natal in the nineteenth century. As such, the mission field denoted both a material process—proselytization, occurring primarily within the physical spaces of missionary stations within Natal—as well as a discursive one—the reliance upon the articulation of religious and moral difference to justify both settler occupation of the land and imperial attempts to re-shape indigenous life. It was a key terrain of struggle, in other words, between the ambitions of settler capital and the aspirations of African Christian people. While the mission station itself could function as a “colonial institution *par excellence* [that] communicated many of the essential ingredients of British rule and the capitalist world economy,” in the words of historian Clifton Crais, the faith it offered simultaneously provided an

“integration of cultural symbols and knowledge that could be both hegemonic and potentially revolutionary.”<sup>227</sup>

As I have argued previously, categories of race and gender were protean in nineteenth-century Natal. These categories in-the-making developed through the constant impact and interaction between differing peoples in the colony and subsequently shaped through attempts to legislate these differences by the settler state. The development of mission stations in the colony provided a space for proselytizers from a variety of Christian denominations to attempt to reorient African men and women toward not only new religious traditions, but to different ways of relating to space, the body, and domestic occupation. Although missionaries operated from multiple denominations and from different places of national origin, they shared a common cause in the transformation of the spiritual and physical lives of their potential indigenous converts. In so doing, missionaries developed and perpetuated discourses of civilizational transformation that linked the spiritually transformative power of the Gospel to the adoption of Western norms of sartorial display, domestic habitation, and family networks. These articulations competed and at times overlapped with settler discourses of uncivilized Africans that lacked proper clothing, housing, or social relations. As with polygamy and intoxicants, the settler state sought in a piecemeal fashion to legislate racial distinctions, particularly in its attempt to pass the Clothing of the Natives Bill in 1880. This bill attempted to shore up claims of white civilization as depicted through ‘appropriate’ sartorial display within the colony, and built upon previous legislation that tried to compel Africans to wear suitable clothing. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century in Natal, the mission station became a site where questions of civilization were debated, particularly around proper displays of dress and inhabitation, displays that drew

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<sup>227</sup> Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, 104.

upon and underlined emergent categories of race and gender. Such a space, then, reveals the limits of settlement in Natal as the settler state also attempted to legally delimit categories of civilization, creating and fostering racialized hierarchies within the colony.

As a site of historiographical investigation, the mission field remains indispensable to understanding the realities of colonial Natal in the nineteenth century.<sup>228</sup> As in Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Canada, mission activity in Natal simultaneously aimed to convert indigenous peoples while seeking to maintain the spiritual vitality—and discipline—of new settler arrivals. However, unlike these other colonies, the overwhelming (and increasing) numbers of indigenous peoples in Natal led to a larger emphasis on indigenous transformation as a critical part of the larger settler colonial project. Missionaries desired the entry of Africans into the spiritual kingdom of Christ at the same time that settlers and colonial officials alike yearned for their assimilation into the political kingdom of the settler state and the economic strictures of the labor regimes they hoped to institute. While the *amakholwa*, or converted Africans, ambivalently accepted the strictures of missionaries (see chapter two for African resistance to missionary denouncement of polygamy and *ilobolo*), they frequently utilized missionary access to land and farming techniques in order to advance their material situations in the contested lands of Natal. Natal's position as a struggling white settler society outnumbered greatly by an indigenous population that surrounded them significantly shaped the history and trajectory of Christian mission movements, which sought to re-direct and re-orient Africans toward new

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<sup>228</sup> This is *not* to argue for a history of missions in Natal that solely makes missionaries the sole focus. Indeed, I would argue that an approach that over-privileges the centrality of missionaries to the larger imperial history within settler societies in southern Africa runs the risk of fundamentally missing the complex dynamics of competition and interplay between various groups that characterize such colonial regimes. This is a particular weakness in Richard Price's *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

spiritual and material horizons that both supported and undermined the desires of European inhabitants.

Missionaries themselves provided significant rhetorical heft to the notion of the ‘civilizing mission’ in Natal, and justified the continued occupation of land to reclaim it and its inhabitants from heathen idleness. Yet, the stations themselves produced a mission field that offered conflicting moments of identity formation among settler, indigenous, and imperial actors. For imperial officials, the field simultaneously justified the colonial project and potentially redirected indigenous Africans towards the economic and social needs of the colony. For settlers, the field offered a sense of contradiction—as a separate space it both alienated labor and land from their grasp, yet still buttressed their claims to moral superiority through religious difference. The mission field, then, presented settlers with a location that both challenged and supported their claims as occupiers of the land particularly through the promise of molding Zulu men and women into appropriately gendered norms within the colony. For missionaries, the mission field justified their presence in the land, built and contested alliances with settlers and officials, and worked along frequently paternal relationships with indigenous peoples. For Zulu men and women the mission field could denote both a location and a project; it was a site where missionaries, settlers, and a colonial state all sought to fundamentally change them—but it also provided a means of challenging (at least discursively) the supremacy of Europeans in Natal.

Earlier work on Natal’s mission history, outside of the near-hagiographies of the mission organizations themselves, offers relatively straightforward interpretations of the role of missions in the colony’s political economy. In particular, groundbreaking work by both Norman Etherington and Jeff Guy place Natal within a larger framework of capitalist settler accumulation

and dispossession of indigenous lands, a factor in which missionaries were ultimately in many ways explicitly linked.<sup>229</sup> Such readings focus on the economic and social conditions of the African homestead, which allowed Zulu men and women more generally to resist Christian conversion for most of the century; the massive conversions of Zulus to Christianity in the twentieth century were accomplished principally by the destruction of effective African economic and social independence, leaving a vacuum in their worlds that allowed them to choose Christianity. This argument has much to recommend it, although it is too reductionist to be completely explanatory.<sup>230</sup> While a Marxist, economically-centered argument places a particularly useful focus on the destructive, material realities that accompanied attempts at religious hegemony, it can obscure, elide, or dismiss indigenous agency in religious affiliation – in part due to the larger narrative aim in explaining the forced absorption of Africans into capitalist systems of labor. Potential converts did not simply view Christianity as one of many commodities on a shelf, making a rational-choice argument for the most practical use of their social and spiritual capital. Indeed, Africans did not accept Christianity within a vacuum. Even as missionaries attempted to mark spiritual transformation through visible acculturation, African Christians pushed back, challenged, and refined discourses on civilization and spiritual change. Nor did missionaries view themselves as cogs in a vast machine of colonial domination— although certainly their work often overlapped with and abetted such efforts in nineteenth century Natal. In this chapter I attempt to critically read missionary and *amakholwa* produced texts in order to understand the complexities of discourses surrounding civilizational

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<sup>229</sup> Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*; Guy, *The Heretic*.

<sup>230</sup> As the late British historian J.D.Y. Peel famously said of missionaries to nineteenth century West Africa, “the redemptive sacrifice of Christ—which stood at the very heart of evangelical preaching—does not imply double-entry bookkeeping or vice versa.” J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Indiana University Press, 2003), 5.

performance and spiritual transformation. These discourses were produced in relation to and in competition with settler conceptions of civilization and shaped state attempts to reorient Africans along European mores toward more recognizably western, and heteronormative, ways of being.

More recent writing on mission Christianity has emphasized a variety of factors, firmly grounding the Christian project in its colonial context but also seeing beyond merely depicting conversion as a threadbare covering hastily stretched over the true intentions of colonial coercion.<sup>231</sup> Recent work has sought to frame the conversion aspects of mission work as the creation of a ‘long conversation,’ a term that acknowledges agency while at the same time retaining the capacity to analyze the unequal power dynamics well advanced by a political economy approach.<sup>232</sup> A ‘conversational’ approach allows an appreciation for indigenous push-back, recasting, and dialogue, while still acknowledging the unevenness of colonial power. Privileging the agency of indigenous practice and the flexibility of both new adherents and proselytizers situates indigenous practice in the context of colonial capital but does not privilege the latter as the sole, or determining, agent of historical change. Moreover, this approach helps to nuance the particular historical paradox presented by missionaries: “they were idealists who were deeply and unavoidably involved in the material transformation of the societies where they worked” despite claims to goals wholly independent of the transformative processes of colonialism.<sup>233</sup> At its best, the conversational model offers a critical appraisal of settlement of

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<sup>231</sup> In her work on missionaries and indigenous believers in the Cape, Elizabeth Elbourne offers the most compelling and nuanced critical imperial work on missions in southern Africa to date. See: Elbourne, *Blood Ground*.

<sup>232</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1*.

<sup>233</sup> Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, 153. This is certainly *not* to proffer a straw man articulation of Marxist, revisionist historiography as lacking inherent nuance—Jeff Guy’s work in *The Heretic* masterfully demonstrates the inherent contradictions of Bishop John Colenso’s seeming liberal approach to indigenous peoples with his equally fervent desire to fundamentally alter their lives. However, I would assert that the ‘conversationalist’ model has much to offer in pushing the analysis past useful, if overly broad depictions of

mission work in Natal that rightfully acknowledges the emotional, social, and spiritual complexities of negotiated relationships between missionaries and potential converts, a needed intervention in mission studies in both colonial and African historiography. Yet I find this approach to not be wholly sufficient for examining the second half of the nineteenth century in Natal, a period where an emergent settler state developed with other contemporary settler regimes across the globe. Yet, unlike these other locations, Natal increasingly turned after 1880 to the work of maintaining settler power as part of a government of entrenched minority rule, a position increasingly evident in the hardening of racialized laws after the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.<sup>234</sup> While the long conversation approach frequently illuminates evangelical power dynamics, the individual autonomy of indigenous adherents, and the complexities of the language of colonialism, it can flatten out the colonial terrain upon which the mission station operated, obscuring the many moving pieces of settler colonial society.<sup>235</sup> To that end, I offer a different take on the history of missions and Christianity in Natal by emphasizing the historically specific and culturally contingent constructions of civilization and settlement in texts produced by missionaries and African Christians. By reading missionary journals, newspaper reports, and legislative reports, I seek to identify prevalent discourses of civilization and subsequent attempts to construct legal categories of proper native behavior among the many competing voices that composed the colonial cacophony of nineteenth century Natal.

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monolithic capitalist accumulative settler societies (with missionaries in tow) and reluctantly affected indigenous communities.

<sup>234</sup> The other settler colonial space that can be considered comparable to Natal in regard to racial minority rule would be the Cape Colony, but the Cape itself at least allowed for limited African and mixed-race franchise in a way Natal never did in the nineteenth century.

<sup>235</sup> Recent work by Robert Houle has effectively argued for indigenous autonomy in the adoption of Christianity, but takes an insufficiently critical approach of the vast power differential that confronted indigenous believers. Houle, *Making African Christianity*; Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*.

As the settler state in Natal expanded in size and reach in the latter half of the nineteenth century, missionaries, settlers, and Africans each utilized civilizational discourses that connected internal progress to external displays of Westernization. Missionaries directly linked the spiritually transformative power of the Gospel to the adoption of Western norms of domestic habitation, sartorial display, and family networks. In so doing, they, along with indigenous peoples, settlers, and imperial officials in the colony marked the mission field as a space to both articulate and contest what *could* and *could not* be possible for the varied inhabitants of the colony. These ‘conditions of possibility’ were cacophonously and constitutively produced as bodies traversed the colonial spaces of Natal, offering social, political and economic advancement yet simultaneously limiting action as being suitable along raced and gendered standards. Missionaries viewed their work as creating a ‘cleared space’ for the propagation of a new normative order, yet they paradoxically attempted in short order to narrow the very possibilities opened up by these missional spaces.<sup>236</sup> Just as chapter two discussed the heteronormativity inherent in settler colonial discourses on polygamy, so too can the discourses offered in the mission field reveal how race and gender were generated and utilized in the midst of both settlement and indigenous resistance.

### **Acculturation, Spiritual Evidence and the Centrality of Natal’s Mission Field**

As both concept and undertaking, the mission field worked to link the needs of settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials, granting legitimacy to settlement and sanction to the transformation of indigenous peoples’ ways of life. Yet missionaries occupied an ambivalent position in these processes. Christianity could and did exist as a powerful redemptive language

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<sup>236</sup> This conception of the mission field as a cleared space where certain potentials approved while others dismissed draws heavily from the insights of both Judith Butler and Sara Ahmed. See: Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 87.

that required personal transformation for all believers—while remaining comfortably within preconceived racial and social hierarchies. Missionaries and many settlers alike argued that the Christianization of Zulu men and women would solve Natal’s apparent settler ‘disorder,’ but they did so believing that the Christianity that they advocated was a system of personal change and sacrifice in which they and all other potential converts were unevenly implicated. In so doing, white men and women advocated for evangelical transformation that operated squarely in the center of the imperial project: it offered moral legitimacy to their occupation but simultaneously placed restrictions on both them and indigenous peoples as fellow believers—although these limitations were shaped fundamentally by the raced, and gendered hierarchies that the project of settlement in Natal was so deeply invested in producing.

As a non-station missionary in the 1850s, George H Mason offers a particularly illuminating view of the ambivalences of missionaries in relation to the larger settler project.<sup>237</sup> Writing about his experiences for an eager London audience, Mason asserted that a “missionary can never be too urgent in reminding the European settlers, and native converts, of their responsibilities as Christians,” regardless of “a person’s attainments, and powers, or his position in the church, or in society.”<sup>238</sup> Here Mason articulated his claim to a position as mediator and negotiator between potentially conflicting elements of Natal society. In this formulation, Mason depicted a multifaceted ‘mission field’ that went beyond the interactions of European proselytizer and native catechist. Rather, the role of minister was expanded to include a variety of ministered subjects—settlers and natives alike come under a preacher’s prerogatives. As a result, the mission field became more than a marginal space within the larger story of settlement;

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<sup>237</sup> As a non-station missionary, Mason was able to travel across the colony, leaving the immediate confines of a local mission station.

<sup>238</sup> G.H. Mason, *Zululand: A Mission Tour in South Africa* (London: James Nisbet & Co, 1862), 164.

in Mason's iteration, the 'mission' was the core of colonial Natal, offering a unifying authority over all members, through recourse to religious legitimacy. Significantly for Mason, the mission station and the 'mission field' were not co-terminous; as a non-stationed, travelling missionary, Mason still visualized the mission field as a moving terrain of power to be mobilized by evangelists. Missionaries in this depiction worked to both provide legitimacy to a settler project as well as reaffirm colonial hierarchies, for settlers and indigenous Africans do not possess equal 'responsibilities as Christians.'

For missionaries like Mason, the mission field's best work lay in redirecting indigenous bodies away from barbarity to civilization, a condition structured by gendered and raced norms. Mason openly advocated for increased mission power in order to turn Zulu men from activities he interpreted as idleness and lust to indications of industry and proper male sexuality. Like many of his contemporaries, Mason bemoaned the 'deplorable' state of Zulu society, where he viewed masculinity as debased by the slavish relations of polygamy and saw indigenous social life as a direct threat to the proper work of socialization ordered by the mission field. While Mason did acknowledge that "the European habits, and the English language, which they gradually pick up in town service, are a counterpoise in some degree to the vices acquired," he maintained that after returning to separate Zulu society, the larger elements of 'civilization' vanished, revealing it to be but the thinnest of veneers.<sup>239</sup> Non-African observers frequently interpreted Zulu actions as indicative of the slim patina of progress that Natal had imparted. In addition to the continued survival of polygamy, lobola, and *insangu* smoking, Western commenters noted continued traditional clothing and social patterns as indications of Natal's desperate need for the mission field to reform and redirect Zulu behavior.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 11–12.

Mason was not alone in arguing for a revolution of Natal society that turned primarily upon an axis of religious faith. While missionaries were certainly the most vocal advocates, a number of colonial observers argued for a view of civilization inherently grounded in the redemptive and transformative message of the Christian Gospel. As Mason asserted, “if...religion can be judiciously coupled with the breaking down of some of their present barbarous usages, then the introduction of universal industry will follow as a matter of course, and will at length bring forth a genuine civilization.”<sup>240</sup> Likewise, settler Eliza Feilden groused in her diary that she feared that the colonial government was allowing Zulus to “grow more saucy than ever; but if they can be Christianized it may be worth the sacrifice of the present generation of white population.”<sup>241</sup> In these formations, the concept of Christianity came laden with its own presuppositions and colonial desires; chief among them the idea of ensuring African conformity to European social and economic imperatives.

This is not to allege that Christianity solely operated as a shrouded superstructure that hid the more vulgar motives of capitalist and colonial exploitation by settlers, colonial officials, and missionaries in a form of grand deceit. Missionaries and some settlers asserted that Christianity must be the primary means of enacting indigenous ‘civilisation’; any other effort would result in a surface level transformation that would fail to take root in the obvious pull of ‘regressive,’ indigenous influences. “Those who attempt to Christianize barbarians discarding evangelistic methods, commit a sad mistake,” cautioned missionary Josiah Tyler, recalling several instances of ‘partially’ educated Zulus who had reverted to true form after a time.<sup>242</sup> Indeed, the very

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>241</sup> Eliza Whigham Feilden, *My African Home: Or, Bush Life in Natal When a Young Colony (1852-7)* (London: T.W. Griggs, 1887), 311.

<sup>242</sup> Tyler, *Forty Years among the Zulus*, 129.

rhetoric of Christianity and civilization suffered an easy slippage at the hands of missionaries and settler observers.

At the same time, many settlers, missionaries, and *amakholwa* genuinely believed in the transformative power of the Gospel, and that spiritual internalization depended upon external change to enact a material sense of the soul transformation they so desired. As Eliza Feilden opined in her journal, indigenous men and women “enjoy their easy taste of barbarism too well to become easily Christianized; Christianity, being a religion of self-denial and moral restraint, strikes at the root of all their sensual enjoyments. Christianity says, ‘Up and be doing;’ but their feelings say, ‘Sit still; what good do we get by exertion?’”<sup>243</sup> There is no doubt about the racism of this statement. Yet, for Feilden, as well as others, Christianity required internal transformation and revolutions in clothing, domestic space, and language that were not required unto themselves, but viewed as the material manifestations of divine transformation. As historian Esme Cleall argues, “Conversion never simply meant a faith-based transfer of allegiance; it had to be embodied in cultural practices. The domestic was an important site where such change was to occur.”<sup>244</sup> Thus, the mission field became more than a side theater of the colonial project; rather, it in many ways represented the stakes of settlement—i.e., that the bodies and souls both indigenous and settler would be transformed into industrious and moral paragons, albeit unequally and with respect to the hierarchies of power that settlers aspired to within colonial Natal.

### **Clothed in Possibility: Sartorial Claims and Spiritual Transformation**

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<sup>243</sup> Feilden, *My African Home*, 16–17.

<sup>244</sup> Esme Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference: Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840-1900* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 49.

The mission field offered in the eyes of settlers, administrators, and missionaries, a particular form of domestic space for Zulu converts: a place where bodies could be redirected toward acceptable norms of behavior that would, in term, help guaranteed social and sexual order. The reproduction of European forms of socialization in the domestic became a marker of ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ and as a result an indicator of the success of the mission project itself in presenting a material manifestation of Christian transformation. However, as scholars have been quick to point out, the ‘domestic’ was not a fully formed concept simply imported from Europe to Africa; rather, it was a complicated set of signals and concepts that evolved in relationship to the economic and social structures on the ground in the colony as well as in the individual material and affective relations between missionaries and converts.<sup>245</sup> In order to properly measure the ‘success’ of conversion (and of their endeavors in general) missionaries relied upon visible markers in African domesticity, particularly in the adoption of proper clothing and home life. Insistence on appropriate apparel reinforced the idea of missionary and mission station as the primary arbiters of spiritual change, casting the mission field as what Nancy Rose Hunt has described as the “spatial center, the pivot that allowed expanding the mission district's borders and domestic knowledge” throughout the colony.<sup>246</sup> Clothing became a primary means of comprehending the seemingly disordered world of indigenous Africans and a means of denoting hegemonic success for Christ’s ambassadors in Natal.

The reliance on external clothing to manifest internal spiritual (and civilizational) change among Zulu peoples is a common theme in nineteenth century Natal. As early as 1846,

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<sup>245</sup> Jean and John L. Comaroff, “Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 37–74.

<sup>246</sup> Nancy Rose Hunt, “Colonial Fairy Tales and the Knife and Fork Doctrine in the Heart of Africa,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 163.

missionaries in Natal were providing calico dresses that Zulu women were required to wear while attending services on the station, only to leave the garments behind for the safeguarded of missionaries until their next visit.<sup>247</sup> While the use of European forms of clothing by Zulu men and women signaled an adoption of social mores and the overall success of the mission field as a discursive project, it also could demonstrate the limits of settlement, as indigenous peoples either resisted sartorial transformations, wore clothing deemed inappropriate, or even worse, reverted back to their indigenous clothing prior to missionary arrival.<sup>248</sup> Writing to *Life and Light*, Natal missionary wife Charlotte Grout despaired over the failed transformation of Nomashinga, a Christian convert in Natal.<sup>249</sup> Despite having been raised from childhood in the Grout's mission school, Nomashinga demonstrated to Mrs. Grout a disturbing "longing for her home and the heathen customs of her people," despite the missionaries offering her a "new dress, slate, and a pencil to draw pictures."<sup>250</sup> The Grouts sought to coerce Nomashinga into enacting the faith she had demonstrated as a child through sartorial displays, instead drawing a binary between indigenous practice and Christian transformation. Yet the delights promised by the missionaries appeared to have been insufficient, for Nomashinga chose to leave the Grout's station and return "home."

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<sup>247</sup> Eva Jackson, "The Economic Experimentation of Nembula Duze/ Ira Adams Nembula, 1845 – 1886," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 27 (January 26, 2011): 9.

<sup>248</sup> This approach was not unique to Natal. Edward Elwin, a British missionary to India mused that "other missions, and especially those worked by dissenters, always make their children and converts wear trousers, on account of which people have sometimes sarcastically spoken of the spread of Christianity amongst the heathen as being made a matter of trousers." Edward Fenton Elwin, *Indian Jottings: From Ten Year's Experience in and around Poona City* (London: J. Murray, 1907), 43.

<sup>249</sup> The Grouts were long-term missionaries appointed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), a predominantly Congregationalist board that also at times admitted Presbyterians, Dutch-reformed and other mainline Protestant sects. Their station eventually grew into a still-extant community, Groutville, located about 40 miles north of Durban, near the coast.

<sup>250</sup> Charlotte Grout, "Nomashinga," *Life and Light for Woman*, 1875, 285.

That Charlotte Grout phrases Nomashinga's decision to leave the mission school and station as a return to home, and away from the home the Grouts had endeavored to create for her is surely significant. Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else does this passage reveal the stakes of the mission field, namely, the creation of a genuine 'home' that supplanted competing indigenous conceptions of the domestic and narrowed the field of gender possibility for converts. It is not a coincidence that the mission field sought to articulate material manifestations of transformed homes for converts at the same time that the larger project of settlement sought to domesticate the wild spaces of Natal. This is not to argue that the two processes were parts of a larger, organized plan, but rather, that the idea of the colony as an act of re-casting settler inhabitation and inhabitants in indigenous spaces ran parallel to and was informed by this spiritual form of domestic re-orientation.

Indeed, in some cases, this re-orientation took on an even more personal form, linking the domestic to the familial, as missionaries understood it. As historians Eva Jackson and Megan Healy have noted, American Zulu Board missionaries like the Grouts often sought to create new kinship networks among their *amakholwa* charges, a goal most explicitly visible in the missionary practice of renaming converts after baptism either with their own names or those of family members back in the United States. Healy and Jackson assert that for these American missionaries, conversion required a profound ontological shift that demanded that indigenous believers "transform, or break with, kin and ancestors that sustained these homesteads to enter into new and uncertain communities predicated on connection to a new and uncertain god."<sup>251</sup> In the wake of such splintering religious decisions, *amakholwa* were expected to take on the new

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<sup>251</sup> Meghan Elizabeth Healy and Eva Jackson, "Practices of Naming and the Possibilities of Home on American Zulu Mission Stations in Colonial Natal," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 29 (May 12, 2011): 5.

physical trappings of clothing and household management; it was in this way that their religious conversion could be made legible to mission observers, and the internal spiritual changes made manifest. Missionaries like the Grouts sought to rewrite kinship networks that their Christian formulation had insisted on breaking in the first place, re-casting Africans into familial structures that linked new converts into nuclear family structures and away from polygamous and long-standing systems.<sup>252</sup> In so doing, missionaries worked to enact heteronormative kinship that explicitly drew Africans into their own families in an attempt to produce affective ties to the faith and its attendant physical transformations. Yet Africans did not, of course, merely submit to these mission projects of re-orientation and legibility; Healy and Jackson document the ways in which early *amakholwa* like Ira Adams Nembula and Joel Hawes (Mbabela Goba) used both names to articulate senses of belonging and space quiet contrary to the simple legibility missionaries may have sought.<sup>253</sup> It is in this context that Mrs. Grout's frustrations with Nomashinga can perhaps be better seen as a struggle over family ties and claims of belonging.

To Mrs. Grout's disappointment, Nomashinga did indeed leave the mission school for her familial home; worse still, she returned to visit the school soon afterwards, having left the trappings of 'civilization' entirely:

She had taken off the nice garments we had given her, and was ornamented in the native style, with a broad band of bead-work around her waist, strings of beads about her neck and forehead; and her woolly hair was filled with oil, which was running down over her face and neck. She looked at me very boldly and proudly, as if she would say, 'See! Do I not look better than I did before?' My heart sank within me; and I could not keep the tears back through most of the service.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> For more on the construction of kinship and the normativizing power of heterosexuality in relation to colonial family networks, see: Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens"; Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*, 5–7.

<sup>253</sup> Healy and Jackson, "Practices of Naming."

<sup>254</sup> Grout, "Nomashinga," 285.

For Charlotte Grout, Nomashinga's actions had resulted in a failure to accept the new domestic life—and ultimately, the affective, familial ties—she desired for her to adopt. The act of reverting from 'nice garments' to ornamentation 'in the native style' represented a material digression that demonstrated a disappointing lack of effective change for the missionary. The emotional reaction that Grout experiences itself is a revelation of the stakes of the mission project in her mind—the work of the Gospel must produce physical transformation that can be observable in the adoption of civilizational norms, mirroring the exhortations of missionaries like George Mason Her broken heart and her tears also perform a proper white female response, modeling the norms which Nomashinga has failed to embrace.

Yet in the end, Charlotte Grout's brief article resolves the 'problem' of domestic reorientation envisioned by the mission project. In her final paragraph she notes that after a few years, she and her husband were "surprised and delighted when we recognized Nomashinga among the well-dressed people. She came to us at once, and introduced her husband, also nicely dressed."<sup>255</sup> In Grout's telling for the missionary magazine, the 'crisis' of mission work has been mercifully averted. Nomashinga, the intrepid Zulu girl and convert has left heathenism and assimilated via proper clothing, and is now paired reassuringly with a fellow Christian husband, also mercifully well-dressed. Ultimately, in Grout's account, Nomashinga rejects her pre-existing family ties and instead casts herself in a proper Christian family mode—one that is monogamous, nuclear, and marked by ties to a mission station and ostensibly individual rather than communal obligations. Thus the sartorial prodigal daughter saga ends happily in Grout's estimation, with the viability of the Christian change reaffirmed and the ability to re-orient the domestic and material centers of indigenous people reinforced.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

Yet to read the document this way misses much of the complexities surrounding dress, domesticity, and authentic faith for indigenous converts. The adoption of appropriate, gendered forms of Western dress served to demonstrate as material proof of discursive repositioning of indigenous bodies through mission activity. As Sarah Tyler, the wife of missionary John Tyler<sup>256</sup>, was quick to note, the transformative power of Christ could be measured in an assessment of the difference between heathen anti-domesticity and civilized habitation. In an article intended for metropolitan readership, Susan Tyler, the wife of missionary Josiah Tyler, emphasized the work of mission field in reorienting Africans from naked barbarism to sartorial civilization. Describing a local Zulu convert, the article noted that “when he became a Christian, he wished to wear civilized clothing; for civilization and Christianity go hand in hand. Had he not been taught by missionaries...we might have seen him to-day, like Umtimuni, wearing his skins, and brandishing his spears and shield.”<sup>257</sup> The article was accompanied by a print of the appropriately clad Christian convert, James Dube, seated at a writing desk and wearing a European suit.<sup>258</sup> Images like this reinforced the notion that the mission project existed to recast indigenous peoples in gendered and raced conceptions of civilized attire. Her comparison of John Dube’s civilized status as opposed to that of the ‘natural’ indigenous state, buttressed by an image of him seated at a desk and wearing Western clothing, demonstrated an investment in a physically observable manifestation of Christian transformation. For white observers, dress marked the most obvious means of social improvement and the adoption of heteronormative social relations embodied properly by the ‘domestic’ in Natal. In this iteration, indigenous men

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<sup>256</sup> The Tylers were Congregationalist missionaries from New England.

<sup>257</sup> Susan W Tyler, “The Contrast,” *Life and Light for Woman*, 1874, 92–93.

<sup>258</sup> James Dube was the father of John L. Dube, who in 1912 became the first president of the organization that evolved into the African National Congress.

and women left the polygamous world of the *umuzi* and instead embraced the propertied, individualist, and sartorially appropriate world of Christianity and settlement.

Like Charlotte Grout, Lady Barker experienced a ‘puzzling’ encounter with a *kholwa* servant, Maria, during her stay in Natal in the 1870s.<sup>259</sup> For Barker, Maria was a perfect servant, primarily for her cleanliness, dedication, and above all, a Christian faith that she manifested through frequent recourse to Bible reading, along “with a beaming countenance, and the sweetest voice and prettiest manners possible.”<sup>260</sup> Having been orphaned at an early age and raised by missionaries, Maria offered Barker a model of crude piety that she indulgently contrasted with her own, more rarified variety, and Maria’s steadfast attention to the demands of the Englishwoman earned her a favored place in Barker’s household. Maria was so highly esteemed that when Lady Barker and her family returned to London, she brought Maria as well, who seemed to reinforce her perceived conversion by acclimating to life in the metropole. However, after a time, a friend of Lady Barker planned to leave for Natal and required a nurse. Barker arranged for Maria to accompany the friend back to Natal, although she claimed to be heartbroken at the loss of a member of the family staff, especially one that signified the success of colonial hegemony and Christian transformation at the heart of the empire. Pointedly, Barker offered Maria multiple articles of clothing to remind her of the material manifestation of her faith and her reorientation in colonial society, among them a “huge Gainsborough hat” and “two large boxes of good clothes.”

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<sup>259</sup> As the wife of the Colonial Secretary, Lady Barker and her husband, Frederick Broome lived primarily in Pietermaritzburg.

<sup>260</sup> Lady Mary Barker, *Colonial Memories* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1904), 210.

Yet Barker's idea of the perfect servant did not survive the return to Natal. Although Maria apparently thrived "so long as they remained at Durban and Maritzburg," the urban centers of the colony, problems arose as soon as Maria's new household moved somewhere further away from concentrations of settler power. Maria interacted with indigenous community members, and extended relatives that she had not frequently interacted with since her childhood, and exasperated her new employers by fighting with community members who claimed a share in her newfound possessions. After some time, she simply left the civilized orbit of the new family and, according to Barker, "presented herself before my friend clad in an old sack and with necklaces of wild animals' teeth, and proudly announced she had just been married 'with cows.'"<sup>261</sup> Lady Barker, like many of her contemporaries, interpreted this 'return' by Maria to indigenous social norms over the sartorial markers Westernized advancement as a direct marker of the failure of the mission field to do its effective work. Upon hearing the news of the transformation, Barker claimed it demonstrated "how completely her Christianity had fallen away from her, and she had practically returned, on the first opportunity, to the depth of that savagery from which she had been taken."<sup>262</sup> Maria had ostensibly offered Barker an ideal conversion through her orphaned status and her ready adoption of settler norms of behavior; however, her choice to adopt indigenous family connections and clothing demonstrated a rejection of the proposed normative order of the mission field. For women like Barker and Grout, the mission field's transformational work required observable progress that could be ascertained through the adoption of familiar forms clothing and domestic inhabitation and only

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 214.

maintained through constant surveillance and ‘improving’ contact. And it was always subject to backsliding, making the limits of settlement uncomfortably visible across the mission field.

The writings of Catholic missionaries at the Marianhill monastery just beyond the city limits of Durban in the 1880s and 1890s indicate that the particular trope of sartorial propriety evidenced by Eliza Feilden three decades earlier still held purchase. Commenting on the arrival of their first indigenous teacher to the monastery, a Basuto man named Benjamin Makhaba, the Trappist monks at Marianhill noted that “though now a good, pious Catholic and real gentleman in taste and manners, may be, had once run naked in the leathern girdle of his race.”<sup>263</sup> Late arrivals to the missionary project in Natal, the Trappists at Marianhill regarded much of the work by their Protestant counterparts as admirable although not very effective, given the significant number of naked, heathen peoples who surrounded their station. Writing some years after the establishment of the monastery and mission, the Trappists at Marianhill maintained that the “Native’s wardrobe is wonderfully empty. All that the man requires is a girdle of skin or short tails, and he is quite *a la mode*...Children swarm about in the kraals like little swine with no patch of dress other than that with which nature has provided them.”<sup>264</sup> This description is particularly significant in its use of ‘empty’ to describe the clothing of the local population; contemporary settlers would have used the same word to describe the land they inhabited prior to European occupation.

However, by the 1880s, settlers grouched that *empty* was an ironic word to use, as men and women they viewed to be ‘nonindigenous natives’ had moved into the formerly vacant lands and

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<sup>263</sup> Sihlobosami, *Roman Legion on Libyan Fields: Or the Story of the Trappist Missionaries among the Zulus in Natal, South Africa: The Establishment of Their Monastery at Marianhill and the Past and Present Condition and Prosperity Fo Their Missions* (Marianhill: Marianhill Press, 1887), 40.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

were crowding out ostensibly rightful white settlers. These pseudo-natives, in the eyes of settlers, threatened the legitimacy of their occupation and challenged the emptiness settlers imagined over the landscape of Natal with a sartorial emptiness they viewed as dangerously different. Indeed, the designation of the numerous naked children as ‘swine,’ a wandering animal population that despoiled the landscape but were useful if properly harnessed, uncomfortably echoed settler presumptions about both their place as well as the place of indigenous peoples within the colonial project. Everywhere the newly arrived Catholic missionaries looked, the state of nudity of indigenous peoples rendered them destitute, spiritually and materially, and in need of the reorientation of the Gospel.

Marianhill served two purposes: to educate both poor white European children and local native children on the principle that both came from places of abjection and need of the charity and uplift that the Mother Church could provide. Of course, Marianhill’s clergy did not conceive the mission field as an equal, multiracial space of spiritual transformation; like their contemporary mission workers at other stations, the Trappists argued that the transformative message of the Gospel was required by all, although it operated in a profound social and political hierarchy within Natal. Thus, missionaries at Marianhill could claim that all needed to be reoriented by the sacrifice of Christ while maintaining that the demands placed by the faith were different based on the social circumstances of the colony. The primary marker of this hierarchy was, of course, clothing, which symbolized the larger stakes of civilization and the re-directing project of the mission field (and colonialism at large).

But in the rude and dirty state in which the children came from the kraals, it was natural enough they could not and never would be set aside the more decent and refined European boys. That was by the Trappists never intended. They never meant, never once thought of placing the nauseous ‘green’ Kafir, whose only covering is one of the ‘dirt of ages,’ at the same table as their poor but clean and respectable orphans and

destitutes. That was to be a matter of time. The Native boy must first put away all that is loathsome and disgusting.<sup>265</sup>

The ‘decency’ and ‘refinement’ of the European boys, despite their destitution, comes from their apparent relationship to the trappings of civilization, namely Westernized clothing and habits of cleanliness, approved by the Trappists. Although the Trappists claimed that both groups of children were deserving of the transformative work of Christianity, the actual implementation of that work—and its visible markers thereof—remained significantly different, and bundled firmly within racialized notions of appropriateness.

While clothing served as a marker of proper Christianization, its mere presence did not always satisfy observers that appropriate spiritual change had occurred. As Eliza Feilden had noted in 1856, when her male servant, Friday, had acquired a pink dress from a Zulu woman and promptly worn it to collective amusement, inappropriately chosen garments demonstrated a lack of proper transformation. Having instructed Friday firmly and finally that the pink frock was not for men, but for women, she pronounced herself satisfied that he was growing in understanding and moving away from silliness and ignorance, aspects commensurate with Christian conversion and growth in European civilizational mores.<sup>266</sup> Indeed, Zulu attempts to adopt Western clothing styles did not always result in white approval or agreement that the mission field was producing suitable fruit. When the Marianhill missionaries observed a group of Zulus in Western dress in the early 1880s, they were not convinced by the civilizational trappings had brought about either social change or spiritual transformation, and said so in damning terms:

It was thus a very gratifying spectacle to the monks when they beheld the Zulu ‘gorillas’ that had previously run wild and naked over the land now promenading in Indian file quite *comme il faut*, real Kafir ladies and gentlemen got up in all the latest Paris

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>266</sup> Feilden, *My African Home*, 289.

costumes. And yet the whole thing was the greatest deception on earth. Our reader will often have read with delight in his youth of the silly lion that stalked with majestic gait in the skin of an ass, or the equally stupid daw that strutted proud in borrowed feathers. History once more repeated itself. The Kafir brunette flirting barefoot along—for to boots they had not as yet aspired—attired in Belgravian robes of glaring hues was neither more nor less than a whited sepulcher full of rottenness within; and the *vert-galant* dressed in a second-rate soldiers' abandoned garment forcibly reminded one of Mephisopheles in the habit of a son of St. Francis. The Christian's uniform each bore; but they were servants of Satan still.<sup>267</sup>

For the Trappist observers, this scene was a monstrous failure of the mission project itself. That project was intended to produce conditions of possibility that emerged only upon the renouncing of certain other potential realities—among them social organizations like polygamy as well as traditional home building and, significantly, clothing. Yet in this tableau, unconverted Zulus are seen wearing the vestments of the European; they are draped in the coverings of civilization, of advancement, of material and religious progress, but without having tendered the necessary changes to justify them.

If clothing—or the lack of it—was consistent and powerful material signifiers of the deeper spiritual and social transformation claimed by missionaries, then the presumption of indigenous peoples to wear Western dress without proving their Christian worthiness, and with it the powerful signifiers they offered, had to be rejected as an atrocious falsehood. It is this denunciation by the Trappists that reveals the power that lay behind clothing in the colonial context. What's more, the link between indigenous adoption of European clothing and mission Christianity's success and civilizational uplift was so strong that the sight of native peoples in 'proper attire' produced a state of profound anxiety whose effects can be denunciation above. The ferocity of this denunciation by the Trappists demonstrates the limits of the civilization/sartorial transformation equation and suggests how mission field methods for

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<sup>267</sup> Sihlobosami, *Roman Legion on Libyan Fields*, 188–199.

normalizing gender and race identities were constantly open to appropriation and subversion. While the idea of transforming Africans into civilized Christians was the ostensible goal, proper mimicry was never truly or even permanently possible. As Emma Tarlo has observed in colonial India, British observers were adamant that Europeanization was necessary for indigenous subjects, but then balked at mimicry that was too close to the authentic subject, as it blurred the distinctions between the civilizers and their ostensible charges.<sup>268</sup> Indeed, observations like those of the Trappist missionaries reveal moments of African agency in the midst of an ostensibly unidirectional granting of the trappings of civilization—and the attendant anxiety that these indigenous disruptions caused.

The anxiety over indigenous dress evident in writings from the mission field illustrates the ongoing contestations over meaning that operated within the dynamic spaces of Natal's evangelizing project. For as much as missionaries hoped to effect a material transformation in the clothing of Zulu men and women in order to mirror the interior changes they yearned for, their erstwhile indigenous charges frequently disputed this connection between cultural assimilation and religious change. Indeed, in many instances Africans successfully challenged attempts by settlers and missionaries to re-orient them, often by making direct recourse to the same spiritual claims that their European counterparts made. In her diary, Eliza Feilden once again recounted an amazing instance of missional redirection by her servant, Louisa:

She came to me on Saturday, 'You know me want?' 'What do you want, Louisa?' 'Me want go church, all man love God; go church, not work Sunday.' 'Quite right, Louisa, you shall go to church. I cannot walk so far, so we have church here to worship God. You must come soon back at night.' 'No! me stay all night, me go church, me not work, God rest.' So I suppose we must help ourselves on a Sunday in future."<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 40–42.

<sup>269</sup> Feilden, *My African Home*, 28–29.

In this exchange Louisa cleverly and carefully asserts her own autonomy from Feilden's work demands by turning her rhetoric against her. Settlers assumed that proper Christian action would require indigenous peoples to submit to hierarchies of order and command, in order to demonstrate genuine religious commitment. Yet in this instance, Louisa successfully countered Feilden's reasoning by articulating a shared Christian language. In so doing, she demonstrates spiritual commitment through physical action, yet also manages to do so independent of Feilden's desired work goals.

Likewise, the shared language of Christianity in this instance constrained Feilden from being able to further compel Louisa to work, as she had appealed to a religious sense of duty that superseded that to her ostensible mistress. Although Feilden did use this occasion to grumble in her journal that "She talks of love to God, but does not strive to please her mistress, and, so far as I can judge, she does not know that she is a sinner, and yet I suppose she is as good a specimen of a convert to Christianity as most of these."<sup>270</sup> This exchange shows Feilden's attempt to use religious language to compel Louisa, as a convert, into correct patterns of obedience that acknowledge her hierarchical power as a mistress over Louisa's work and ability to rest. However, according to Feilden's diary, it appears that Louisa continued successfully to resist further attempts at compulsion through continued recourse to Christianity. According to Feilden, Louisa "went to church as usual in the afternoon, but I told her she must be back before six in the morning to make breakfast. She arrived when I was washing the breakfast things and putting them away, and expressed no regret."<sup>271</sup> As a result, Louisa was able to claim a form of piety that rejected attempts to redirect her as a native servant into 'appropriate' forms of action.

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 32.

Rather, she made claim to a spiritual transformation by choosing to engage in external worship practices—that simultaneously freed her from obedience from Feilden’s time schedule, i.e, from the discipline and oversight of her mistress. The exchange between Louisa and Feilden is but one of many exchanges in nineteenth century writings that can be read critically for signs of indigenous resistance through recourse to Christianity, and for evidence of conversion as a pathway to new forms of agency, if not freedom, for African women as well.

In her imagining of Nomashinga’s personal thoughts, Grout hinted at her charge’s internal motivations. Reading the article against the grain, it becomes possible to see how Nomashinga herself might have articulated Christianity, the mission field, familial ties, and domestic spaces very differently than Charlotte Grout. While she may have chosen to leave the mission station, Nomashinga did not leave it permanently, having made her significant visit in new clothing soon after leaving. Rather, it seems that Nomashinga contested and reframed the domestication project that Mrs. Grout envisioned as central to the mission field. By returning to the mission school dressed in her very best traditional clothing, Nomashinga could have been making a profound statement about home and family belonging. Such a reading echoes Elizabeth Elbourne’s assertion about the stakes of writing about the complexities of mission Christianity and indigenous agency:

it is easier on the pen to celebrate resistance to westernization than to understand the partial incorporation of western myths and technologies, but this natural tendency cannot do justice to the ambiguity, pain, and partial accommodation that are the stuff of everyday life.<sup>272</sup>

Quite possibly, the transformational work of Christianity did not necessarily require sartorial assimilation; rather, she chose to make a significant choice by returning to present both her

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<sup>272</sup> Elbourne, *Blood Ground*, 196.

spiritual affiliation as well as her own articulations of internal change by retaining indigenous clothing. The resultant bricolage produced by blending indigenous clothing and foreign worship service could offer a profound witness to transformation and a claim by Nomashinga to belong in multiple spheres, a claim that Mrs. Grout's binarized worldview would not enable her to comprehend.<sup>273</sup> When Mrs. Grout observed Nomashinga, she described her as looking "boldly and proudly," which need not be separate from a desire to assert her place in both worlds—or perhaps, her rejection of the need to choose between them.

As with Grout, it is possible to read Barker's reports critically for multifaceted indigenous responses in this 'exchange'. As European observers sought to open the conditions of possibility by dramatically foreclosing others, such as the 'return' to ostensibly savage vestments, Zulu actors like Maria and Nomashinga did not simply accept this redirecting along colonial lines of order. Rather, by rejecting Western clothing it is not readily apparent that Maria was rejecting Christianity—but rather, that she was refusing to enforce the hedge that missionaries, settlers, and administrators sought to erect between unclothed heathenism and civilized *amakholwa*. Maria's adoption of clothing as well as her acceptance of marriage into a rural Zulu community likewise can be seen as means of articulating a history and a sense of both family and continuity outside of the mission stations that sought to take the place of her parents, who had died at an early age. Thus, Maria's story of traveling from Natal to London and back does not necessarily, as Lady Barker would have it, represent "an amazing instance of the strength of race-instinct."<sup>274</sup> Instead, it can provide an instance of indigenous redirection that

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<sup>273</sup> For the use of bricolage, see Jonathan Draper's work in Jonathan A. Draper, *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration*, illustrated edition (Continuum, 2004).

<sup>274</sup> Barker, *Colonial Memories*, 214.

subverted the claims of settlers, missionaries, and officials, to dictate the ostensibly unidirectional nature of civilizational attainment.

**Possibility in Print: *Ikwezi* and the domestic rhetoric of the mission field.**

The end goal of the mission field, particularly in the first two decades of Natal, was to facilitate the Christianization of indigenous Africans, a process rendered visible through the adoption of European cultural and social norms. Consequently, some missionaries sought to use Christian conversion to bridge the disparate spaces of settlers, indigenous peoples, and colonial officials. By making observable progress as the ultimate end goal of Christianity in the province, missionaries offered a rhetorical vision that imagined the mission station, settler establishment, and imperial power as interlocking, interconnecting aspects of evangelical life in the colony. Nowhere was this more obvious than the pages of *Ikwezi* (“Morning Star,” which ran from 1861-68), the first Zulu language newspaper published in Natal, produced under the auspices of the Esidumbini Mission Station under the direction of American missionary Josiah Tyler.<sup>275</sup> *Ikwezi* is a curious source, for it is difficult to determine exactly who has authored which piece, and the archaic Zulu is exceedingly difficult to comprehend in some passages.<sup>276</sup> Ultimately, the brief life of the newspaper offers a critical moment of engaging with the attempts of white missionaries to link disparate social and physical worlds in Natal through discourses of language, spirituality, and physical transformation.

The very first issue of *Ikwezi* established its role as a conduit between settlers, missionaries, and Zulus. The ostensible goal of the paper—to facilitate the creation of a literate

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<sup>275</sup> Esidumbini was located about fifty miles north of Durban. Tyler, *Forty Years among the Zulus*, 141.

<sup>276</sup> I have discovered very little written on *Ikwezi* in an academic context. While the newspaper merits a brief mention in Jonathan Draper’s work, I have seen little written in the depth. See Draper, *The Eye of the Storm*.

class of educated, native Christians by providing them a forum for education, exchange, and self-improvement—fit well within the rhetoric of the mission field as a mechanism for producing material change within indigenous peoples. In the first article, “Izindaba ngokuqala kwa le ncwadi,” (The first news from the paper), an unknown contributor celebrated the long-desired arrival of a newspaper, explaining the significance for Christian Africans in obtaining access to such a means of expression:

All the white people, they have newspapers. Some are printed every day in the morning and in the evening. If a white person is not receiving a newspaper, we say he's poor; if he's not poor, we say he should be pitied greatly, because he sits not knowing anything about what's happening to people like him in other nations. So then, why can't *we* have books? There are so many of us who read at all of these mission schools!<sup>277</sup>

From the very beginning *Ikwezi* demonstrated the mimetic strategy employed by many Christian Africans in order to make claims to belonging within colonial Natal. For the author, reading *Ikwezi* allows the imagined Zulu reader to claim knowledge and access to power in a manner similar to Europeans. By possessing a newspaper, Zulus could become *like* white people by possessing a powerful knowledge of other peoples around the world, knowledge that can potentially be acted upon to their advantage. This knowledge was then contained in a portable fashion through the use of a newspaper, which allows for the further reproduction of European social conventions; namely, the creation of a domestic space where printed material provided a form of familial socialization, discussion, and uplift.

The article's reference to the stakes of domestic space became more explicit as it continued, illustrating a familiar turn towards rendering the home as a site for demonstrating

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<sup>277</sup> “Izindaba ngokuqala kwa le ncwadi,” *Ikwezi*, April 1861. Original Zulu: Abelungu bonke, ba na zo izincwadi. Ezinye zi cindezelwa ngemihla yonke kusasa na kusihlwa. Uma umlungu enga yamukeli incwadi, si ti umpofu lowo, uma enge mpofu, si ti, u fanele uku datyukelwa kakhulu, ngokuba u hlezi, e ngazi 'luto ngokuhamba kwabantu aba njengaye ezizweni ezinye. Po ke si nge be nayo ngani incwadi tina na? Singabafundayo abaningi kangaka Ezikoleni zonke!

physically meaningful civilizational and spiritual transformation: “We greatly love that we are constantly seeing books in the homes of black people and it is such love that leads us to produce this newspaper.”<sup>278</sup> In this way, the entire *purpose* of the newspaper was linked to the creation of a domestic space that reproduces European forms as a means of demonstrating Christian conversion and civilizational readiness, twin aims that found early acceptance among a large segment of Natal’s population. Finally, the close of the article made clear the idea of the mission project serving as a bridge that linked settlers, missionaries, and indigenous people through vehicles like *Ikwezi*. The author exhorted indigenous readers to “write of your customs as well as those of the whites—do not fear, for you are addressing each other.”<sup>279</sup> As a result, *Ikwezi* was imagined as a direct implementation of mission prerogatives, by linking Africans and Europeans through discussions that demonstrate indigenous conformity and therefore religious and spiritual progress, key factors used by both settlers and indigenous peoples to advance their claims to legitimate occupation of Natal.

In some issues, *Ikwezi* served to articulate the overlap between the missional and the colonial projects at large. In January 1863, a prominent article announced that:

The nation of Natal is now progressing. By the construction of bridges across rivers—and roads under repair—good homes are increasing—the land is being farmed—sugar cane and cotton and coffee and some food grow...Black people are being taught in schools, this is going well, they are accepting the truth of God’s Word.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid. Original Zulu: Si tanda kakulu ukuba si yi bone njalo incwadi pakathi kwezindhlu zabantu amanyama na loko’kutanda ku si rolele ukuba si yi veze le’ncwadi.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. Original Zulu: Lobanini ngemikuba yabantu ba kini nangabamhlope, ninga sabi, ni shumayezane.

<sup>280</sup> “Izwe Lase Natal Li Ya Buswa Manje,” *Ikwezi*, January 1863. Original Zulu: Izwe lase Natal li ya buswa manje. Kwenziwa amabruhu (bridges) pezu kwemifula—nemigwaqo I ya lungiswa---izindhlu ezinhle ziyanda—umhlabati u ya linyway—umoba nekampokwe nekofi nokunye ukudhla...Abamnyama bay a fundiswa ezikoleni, ba busa kakulu, bay a fukulwa’mpela ngezwi leNkosi.

In this article, the author linked the notion of Natal’s material progress—roads, bridges, farms, homes—with the Christianization of indigenous peoples. Although both may be more aspirational than real (Natal remained one of the least successful sites of proselytization throughout the century).<sup>281</sup> Nonetheless, the linking between the two concepts is quite explicit.

While *Ikwezi* ostensibly provided a testing ground for a newly literate, educated Christian Zulu class to discuss issues of importance to them, the American missionaries that produced the paper also insisted upon providing updates of news and information about the wider world in order to better inform their charges.<sup>282</sup> As a result, articles in *Ikwezi* described geopolitical events around the world, with particular emphasis on settler society within the United States.<sup>283</sup> American missionaries writing in *Ikwezi* occasionally articulated images of other indigenous peoples and settler rhetoric—in Zulu. The most apt example of this in *Ikwezi* occurred in the August 1863 issue. The article offered a line drawing (see figure 1) of a native North American man standing in a wild forest, while a child hung nearby in a tree. The accompanying text read as follows:

This picture shows a North American Indian! Here is a child. Some children are hung up in trees. Indians in the country of America are Red people. There are many tribes. Some are believers. Some are in darkness, they are constantly fighting. Among the Sioux peoples, it is said that a girl will reject a man who does not bring her the scalp of an enemy.<sup>284</sup>

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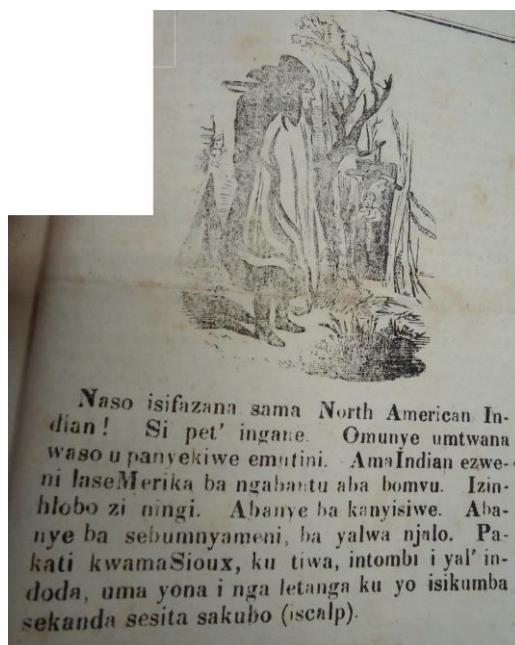
<sup>281</sup> For more on the very minimal progress of Christian conversion among Zulu peoples in the nineteenth century, see: Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*; Houle, *Making African Christianity*.

<sup>282</sup> Of particular interest is the Zulu language explanation of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, made by Inkosi Mr. Lincoln (“Chief Mr. Lincoln”).

<sup>283</sup> The January 1863 article, in addition to describing the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, also described how Presidential elections took place and provided a brief sketch of how American politics functioned.

<sup>284</sup> “Naso Isafazana Sama North American Indian!,” *Ikwezi*, August 1863. Original Zulu: Naso isifazana sama North American Indian! Si pet’ ingane. Omunye umtwana waso upanyekiwe emutini. Ama Indian ezweni lase Merika ba ngabantu aba bomvu. Izinhlobo zi ningi. Abanye ba kanyisiwe. Abanye ba sebumnyameni, ba yalway njalo. Pakati kwamaSioux, ku tiwa, intombi I yal’ indodda, uma yona I nga letanga ku yo isikumba sekanda sesita sakubo.

By presenting the information of the Sioux in such a manner, the editors opened multiple conditions of possibility. First, they offered a sense of domestic knowledge gathering that reproduced European (and American) forms of sociability—namely, such reporting, sought to reproduce the idea of newspaper reading as a properly domestic activity of exchanging and discussing information. In addition, however, such a project offered an outgrowth of the civilization/religious transformation discourse in Natal; ostensibly, indigenous peoples in Natal were to become ‘native settlers’ in the colony. In so doing, they could own land, build dwellings recognizable to Western observers as ‘proper,’ and more importantly, could recognize other indigenous peoples through a mental rubric of settlement. In the depiction of the Sioux that the Esidumbini missionaries offered through *Ikwezi*, a stark division was made between a ‘wild’ and undomesticated people with the potentially transformed, civilized subject reading about such a tribe in the newspaper itself. Christian Zulus were invited to partake in observing the ‘exotic’ peoples of the world from the vantage point of civilizational occupation, commenting on the wildness of men who removes scalps in order to perform savage rituals of love. By denoting these people as warlike and in darkness, the article worked to discursively underline who is and who is *not* civilized; instead of creating a sense of global indigeneity, the article worked to foster an idea of a global settlerdom, producing a vision of a wild North American people from the vantage of settler to other would-be settlers (that happen to be ‘native’) in Natal.



(Figure 1: *Ikwezi*, August 1863)

*Ikwezi* did not survive the departure of Josiah Tyler from the Esidumbini station in 1868. However, the periodical remains an invaluable part of Natal history, not simply because it is the first extant newspaper printed in Zulu, but because it offers a unique look at the challenges of the imagined contours of the mission field in early colonial Natal. In such a formulation, the mission attempted to bridge the perceived divisions between settlers, missionaries, and indigenous peoples, while continuing to invest in notions of successful domestic mimicry as an a priori condition for demonstrating successful Christian transformation. Simultaneously, *Ikwezi* seriously viewed indigenous peoples as contributing members of the paper, albeit still in line with missional goals of creating Christ-centered ‘fellow’ settlers. It is in this tension between desired reorientation and conditions of possibility that the discourses of civilization opened up by the mission field are most keenly visible. *Ikwezi* offered a mixed space of imagined

transformation, where missionaries imagined creating physically changed native peoples who emulated settler views, while *amakholwa* responded to and challenged these assertions.

### **Reproducing the Domestic: Edendale as Mimetic Space and Civilizational Challenge**

As with clothing, adherence to the contours of a ‘proper’ domestic space might be evidence of a physical manifestation of Christian change. The act of colonial domestication, of rendering landscapes hospitable to proper occupation, of redirecting rivers and streams and veldt to suitable and sustaining settlement overlapped here with the process of the mission field. Men and women were expected, upon conversion to render their bodies—and the houses and clothing that covered them—as visible markers of that internal soul change. Repeatedly, British men and women, regardless of their position as missionaries, settlers, or colonial officials, viewed the viability of Christian conversion primarily in terms of dress and domestic habits—the successful acculturation physically demonstrated by indigenous peoples were regarded as material manifestations of the true adherence of an indigenous convert to the new faith. The experiment at Edendale offers an archive of how that aspiration unfolded inside the parameters of a built environment expressly designed for such purposes.

Founded by missionary James Allison on land purchased from departing Boer leader Andries Pretorius in 1851, Edendale became both a model mission settlement and a profound curiosity in Natal.<sup>285</sup> Of particular interest to settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials alike

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<sup>285</sup> Edendale also became name to the larger apartheid-era township that developed the original mission station, situated about six miles south of Pietermaritzburg. Sheila M Meintjes, “Edendale 1850-1906: A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal” (PhD Thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1988), 119–120; Debbie Whelan, “Whose Colony and Whose Legacy? Layers of Power and Hybrid Identities in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa,” in *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa: Intertwined and Contested Histories*, by Fassil Demissie (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 108–109.

was Allison's plan to extend land tenure to his African convert community. Edendale's community members consisted of a diverse group of Africans (Basotho, Zulu, and other ethnic groups among them) who purchased the lands upon which their homes were built, and most endeavored to construct European-style homes on the property in stark contrast to indigenous houses. As a result, through the course of the nineteenth century Edendale offered observers a model of African land tenure as well as reproductions of European cultural norms.

Visitors repeatedly made mention of Edendale's central distinguishing feature, its sizable chapel, erected at a cost of over £1000. Upon visiting in 1875, Lady Barker remarked upon the grandeur of the building and how "nearly every penny of which has been contributed by Kafirs, who twenty-five years ago had probably never seen a brick or a bench, and were in every respect as utter savages as you could find anywhere."<sup>286</sup> For Barker, the establishment of a chapel marked the high point of the mission project at Edendale, having successfully inculcated Africans with not only a sense of Christian duty, but literally, a commitment to investment in notions of proper domesticity—the bricks and benches that she declared to be lacking in Zulu homesteads. The following year, a letter to the *Natal Witness* hastened to praise the industry of the residence of Edendale, paying particular attention to the costly chapel as well as informing readers that "the natives of the village have neat little cottages, of green-brick, well finished and kept as tidy as those of the most scrupulous white people; and around these houses may be seen young orchards and prolific gardens of ample extent."<sup>287</sup> Both of these reports, among others, were quick to link the religiosity of the community at Edendale, expressed by the visible outpouring of money and effort in building the main chapel, with an additional form of

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<sup>286</sup> Barker, *A Year's Housekeeping in South Africa*, 198.

<sup>287</sup> "Edendale," *The Natal Witness*, January 11, 1876.

industriousness, the building of proper domestic space. By the 1870s, reports described Edendale largely as an orderly model village, an example for other Africans to follow (and indeed for straggling Europeans). The basis of this claim rested primarily on the ability of indigenous peoples to create spaces that Europeans recognized properly as ‘homes’; these domestic spaces could function as orientation devices that both reinforced settler claims to the proper direction of the mission field and the colonial project in Natal at large, while simultaneously indigenous peoples could use them to advance their own claims to belonging. These claims were raced and gendered, but revolved primarily around the power of the domestic and ‘home’ as a shared set of signals that supported the idea of the mission field as a space of possibility and transformation that produced claims of belonging.

During her 1876 visit to Edendale, Lady Barker found herself escorted by Zulu women through the domestic spaces they were fiercely proud of having created. One home was of particular interest to Barker, whose African mistress insisted that she view their ‘English bedroom’:

I stood among half-a-dozen common china breakfast cups and saucers, which were symmetrically arranged, upside down, on the toilet-table.

‘What are these for?’ I asked innocently.

‘Dat English fashion, missus; all white ladies hab cup-saucers on dem tables like dat.’

It would have been the worst possible taste to throw any doubt on this assertion, which we all accepted with perfect gravity and good faith, and then returned to the drawing-room much impressed apparently by the grandeur of the bedroom.<sup>288</sup>

Despite Barker’s genteel scorn at the ‘improper’ enactment of English domestic space, the exchange remains a significant moment of contested meaning between *amakholwa* and colonial elite, between indigenous actor and imperial visitor. Even if the setting is not recognized by

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<sup>288</sup> Barker, *A Year’s Housekeeping in South Africa*, 204.

Barker as being acceptably representative, she is bound by ‘taste’ and English social custom in this recreated domestic space and cannot correct her hostess. Through Barker, we see how the English bedroom, with its many assorted china cups, emerged not as an exemplar of Christian order but as troubling evidence of contestation between Edendale Christians and colonial observers, even as the authentic observer is restrained by the very social mores she is attempting to inculcate in Edendale’s population.

The project of creating a recognizably domestic space in Edendale attracted considerable settler attention as a successful project in mission acculturation. In 1879, the *Natal Witness* reported on an interracial event held at Edendale during the Anglo-Zulu War and took time to lavish praise upon the development of the mission station:

[T]he civilization of the Edendale settlement is no mere artificial growth, which accident may sweep away in a few years' time. It is no house built upon the sand of a merely personal influence which may be withdrawn. It is rather a house built upon the rock of natural adaptiveness, of sterling moral and intellectual qualities, of a capability for the assimilation of the complex conditions of civilized life.<sup>289</sup>

It is no coincidence that the analogy of the ‘house’ is used to describe the civilizational status of Edendale. The term functions both as a Christian allegory, reflecting Christ’s exhortation to build faith upon a solid foundation and as a mirror of the domestic spaces that had earned Edendale such attention from settlers—the European-style homes and the emulous furnishings within. Continuing to praise the advancement of Edendale’s native citizenry through their adoption of settler norms, the *Witness* correspondent looked ahead to the potential resolution of the mission project, opining that, “The future of an institution which requires continued supervision and direction from those who have been instrumental in starting it may very reasonably be doubted. Leading strings and apron-strings are all very well in infancy, but they

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<sup>289</sup> “The Native Question,” *The Natal Witness*, August 16, 1879.

are a sign of want of *manly existence*, even of imbecility, when their presence is visible in later life.”<sup>290</sup> The *Witness* article argues that the mission field has successfully achieved its goals in places like Edendale. For some readers, Edendale’s accomplishment might have been to link the removal of ‘apron strings’ with a true and proper course of masculine action. It may also have shown that maintaining Africans like those at Edendale in a state of tutelage would be infantilizing and ultimately degrading to ‘manly existence’ for both colonial society and Africans themselves. And yet Edendale’s establishment as a mimetic space of domestic reproduction could visibly unsettle the underpinnings of the colonial project in Natal.

The tension between ‘proper’ reproduction of domestic space and clothing—so critical to demonstrating both civilizational and Christian conversion—were in full force when Lady Barker paid her visit to an Edendale household:

I was specially invited to look at the contents of the good wife's wardrobe hung out to air in the garden...I did not possess anything half so fine. Sundry silk dresses of hues like the rainbow waved from the pomegranate bushes; and there were mantles and jackets enough to have started a secondhand clothes shop on the spot.<sup>291</sup>

The description here is an intriguing one; Barker seems at turns celebratory, envious, and dismissive of the sartorial possessions of an Edendale housewife. Echoing her earlier description of the poorly reproductive ‘English bedroom,’ Barker’s observation of the clothing out to dry seems to signal both approval and yet a desire to distance herself from this attempt at reproduction. The potential that a Zulu woman might have so fully absorbed the civilizational lessons of church and closet cannot be openly countenanced in such a description—as a result, Barker praises the unnamed woman for her collection of fashionable gowns while also faintly mocking the collection as excessive, comparing it to a ‘secondhand shop.’ Implicit in this

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. The emphasis is my own.

<sup>291</sup> Barker, *A Year’s Housekeeping in South Africa*, 205.

description is the fundamental tension between the civilizational pretensions of the mission project, as well as the potential disorder that might result if such goals actually came to fruition. As a consequence, women like this Edendale *kholwa* must be celebrated but also held in check by their excessive decoration and their failure to *truly* become like their settler models through proper gendered behavior. White observer praise was tellingly limited to a future present in part because the actual present was much less safe ground when it came to evidence of civilizational success.<sup>292</sup> While some settlers (like Feilden), colonial leaders, and missionaries were agreed in advancing the mission field as a raced and gendered project of reorientation, the fears of its *actual success* in granting Africans the civilizational trappings to claim a shared Christian and settler status along with an equal right to occupy the land would lead these coalescences to splinter throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century.

The positive reports offered by myriad colonial observers at Edendale left open the possibility of casting Africans as potential settlers of the land, building square houses, planting orchards, and filling these spaces with the latest furnishings. The voices of different members of the colony—settlers, administrators and missionaries, each with differing aims and objectives – coalesced around the ‘mission field’ in this model village, linking Christian transformation to the idea of becoming a proper settler of the land. Such rhetoric, paradoxically, reinforced and justified European settler claims to the land while simultaneously sowing seeds of a profound indigenous challenge to settlement. Settlers, missionaries, and colonial officials used the

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<sup>292</sup> Barker’s reaction typifies what Homi Bhabha described as colonial mimicry’s ability to serve as a “sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance that coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.” Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 153.

production of appropriate ‘domestic spaces’ by Africans in order to praise Edendale as a model of Christian faith and civilizational development. In so doing, they also recognized and produced their own claims to legitimacy. These praises were more than condescending acknowledgment of African mimicry of Western social norms, and certainly more than the arrogant delight at ostensibly seeing their own values reflected back at them; rather, these observations demonstrate an investment in shared modes of settlement and occupation of the land. In short, by articulating home and ‘the domestic’ as an orientation device, settler observers discursively attempted to justify their own raced and gendered claims to occupation yet offered others the ability to do so as well.

For all of its ostensible exceptionality, Edendale would not remain untouched by the shift in colonial attitudes in the years following the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. As settlers, missionaries, and imperial officials slowly grasped that a white settler majority was not to materialize, the loose coalitions that supported the project of assimilation engendered by the mission field crumbled. Imperial officials, particularly following political reversals and military overextension across the globe, decreased investment in the transformation of indigenous peoples, content to devolve authority increasingly to a settler minority regime, culminating in the granting of Responsible Government in 1893. Settlers, for their part, worked to secure their control in a racialized hierarchy in Natal, limiting perceived threats to their authority. In 1879 *The Natal Witness* had argued that Edendale’s progress meant that the time was ripe for native Christians to assume equality within the structures of Natal; a few short years later, as settlers intuited that they would never possess the logistic majority they craved, public opinion had largely turned against the notions of civilizational progress, Christian development, and potential political equity across racial lines. As Norman Etherington has documented, concerted

government efforts to limit African attempts to buy land only began to occur in force after 1880 and particularly to limit African economic survival in order to protect settler farming interests in the last decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>293</sup>

The extent of the changes in colonial coalitions regarding the mission field is abundantly clear in an 1880 *Witness* report on a war monument erected at Edendale. Far from the immense praise heaped upon the converts less than a year earlier, the correspondent claimed:

In vain in the whole of Edendale we looked for any very striking evidence of Christianity. There were missionaries and a Bible; to these we are accustomed. We have seen them where the missionaries had as yet made no converts--clothed pagans, aye, even clothed cannibals, we have seen—a pair of trousers is not an evidence of faith....We saw the European inhabitants of the City of Maritzburg treated with marked contempt, kept standing in the sun as inferiors, in the presence of the preachers of a gospel of humility, and of the pampered 'Makolwas' of the station.<sup>294</sup>

In the hardening racial attitudes of a post-Zulu War settlement, African Christians found that their attempts at reproducing settler society through mimetic displays regarding the domestic were interpreted very differently. Despite the positive statements evinced prior to 1880, indigenous people frequently came to learn that “flourishing Christian communities (at least those with which missionaries were happy) were always located in the future.”<sup>295</sup> Settlers now saw these attempts as threats on their minority rule status, and sought to degrade, discount, and dismiss such sartorial and domestic claims on civilization and inclusion. The mission field as a space that buttressed colonial occupation eventually lost coalitional support in colonial Natal not for the failure of the mission project at creating *amakholwa* that could reproduce effectively civilizational trappings, demonstrating internal conversion; rather, support faded in the latter decades of the century precisely because the project had become such a threatening success.

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<sup>293</sup> Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*, 162–168.

<sup>294</sup> “Unveiling the Monument,” *The Natal Witness*, February 14, 1880.

<sup>295</sup> Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference*, 57.

### **Discourse to Practice: The 1880 Clothing of the Natives Bill and Civilizational Rhetoric**

As with intoxicants, the rapid pace of even uneven social change provoked unease and ultimately, a recourse to law as a means of establishing normative identities when settlers or missionaries seemed unable to do so. In this case the question was native nakedness, another site of department settlers deemed in need of regulation to guarantee social order in the colony. The larger shifts in settler society that sought to shore up minority rule following the Anglo-Zulu War played upon existing discourses that pegged civilization to sartorial demonstration. A growing settler state attempted to delimit native peoples increasingly through racialized and restrictive legislation. In 1880, the Natal Legislative Council debated the strengthening of a pre-existing “Clothing of the Natives Bill” in order to combat the moral and spiritual challenge of Africans continuing to appear ‘naked’ within the colony. Mr. Garland, a member of the Legislature, insisted that the Government must “demand that every Kafir should be clothed to stop the spread of immorality,” arguing that he had “been asked by men in high places in England—‘What has your Government done for the Natives of Natal?’ and I was compelled to answer—‘Nothing for their elevation or Christianisation.’”<sup>296</sup> In the rhetoric of legislators like Garland, the continued adherence of Zulu men and women to indigenous norms of clothing demonstrated a lack of civilizational (and ultimately Christian) adoption within Natal. It is here, in these 1880s discussions, that we most clearly see the interconnected spaces of the mission field within the colony at large. Settlers and missionaries both asserted that Christian transformation, which had so routinely been directly linked to acculturation via modes of dress, had failed to make the

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<sup>296</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--Eighth Council, from November 6, 1879 to February 19, 1880*, vol. I (Pietermaritzburg: Vause, Slatter & Co, 1880), 200.

inroads they had as yet hoped for, given that larger numbers of Africans continued to resist Western clothing norms.

The discussion of the Bill was influenced strongly by the opinion of imperial administrators and the metropolitan public. Prominent legislator and future Prime Minister John Robinson reflected upon the indecency of native nakedness and its implications for Natal's reputation back in metropolitan Britain:

It has long been a matter of remark, and especially by new comers to the Colony, that our Natives should be made to clothe themselves, and I need only remind the House of an instance at Home—as a powerful incentive to us to take some measures to remedy the present state of affairs—in which the chaste mind of the Lord Mayor of London was inexpressibly shocked, not by seeing the stern, naked reality (*laughter*) that confronts us daily, but a photograph of that spectacle.<sup>297</sup>

For Robinson, the nakedness of Africans in the colony had created a different kind of problematic exposure for the colony. The idea of British observers in the metropole disparaging African nudity ran the risk of demonstrating settler failure to both bring about civilizational uplift among their native charges, but also potentially revealed that the 'stern, naked reality' of colonial life in Natal was not as morally upright as its settlers desired. Indeed, Thomas Garland complained that metropolitan Britons had challenged the morality of Natal's white settlers for their failure to transform the indigenous population:

I myself have been asked by men in high places in England—'What has your Government done for the Natives of Natal?' and I was compelled to answer—'Nothing for their elevation or Christianisation.' I feel that nothing has been done: that there is no Institution in the Colony which as for its object the elevation of these masses of Natives.<sup>298</sup>

These concerns were echoed by J.C. Boshoff, who further framed the question of nakedness in terms of harming potential British emigration to the colony:

I should like to know why a respectable family man coming from London here should see a lot of the niggers coming before him in this condition. (*Laughter*). He and his family of boys and girls will all run away. Surely it is the duty of the Council to take these

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid., I:149.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., I:200.

disgraceful scenes away. I think it would be one of the best things that could happen to pass this law.<sup>299</sup>

In Boshoff's argument, African nudity and lack of civilization threatened both the order of the colony and the likelihood of attracting other settlers to further improve the region. African nakedness, then, became shorthand for larger questions of an uncivilized native majority that undermined the continued security of white arrivals.

It is not a coincidence that as the 1880s dawned, colonial documents recorded continued missionary and settler frustration with indigenous 'failure' to transform at the same moment that the settler state sought to increase the strength of its minority rule over the colony. "Barbarism and nakedness are almost synonymous terms," bellowed Robinson during the debate. "As long as we conserve nakedness we conserve Barbarism."<sup>300</sup> Legislator John Walton concurred that clothing of some sort was needed for Africans and added a financial incentive in the process, arguing, "anything that will tend to civilize the natives will assist us in governing them...it will not only tend to civilize the natives but will tend to increase the revenues of this Colony."<sup>301</sup> Alexander Walker agreed that African nakedness represented a lack of civilization, and also argued that nakedness threatened degeneracy and improper sexuality for settlers, stating, "I should not like to see any Kafir come into my House in a naked state. If the Law will not help me, then, I say, I am justified in taking a stick or a bludgeon to enforce decency being observed. It is not the decent but the indecent Kafirs I want protection from."<sup>302</sup>

Debates over African nakedness and civilization differed along gendered lines for the settler legislators. Thomas Garland argued at length with multiple legislators over differences in the way that African male and female nakedness were viewed by Europeans.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., I:149.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., I:151.

I am surprised that any Honourable Gentleman who lives in the country should have thought of any little difficulty there may be in carrying this measure into effect, when the indecency and immorality is so revolting that it is a common remark amongst ladies.

[Mr. Millar (interposing): I do not think that they object much].

It is a common remark amongst ladies that it is most abominable the sight that is present, especially by the female portion of the community, in their nakedness.

[the Colonial Engineer, Albert Hime (interposing): is it the men or only the ladies that the ladies object to?] (laughter).

I am speaking especially of the immodest dress of the females.

[Mr. Walton (interposing): the want of dress of the females].

Yes it is a well known fact that the men are better clothed than the women. It is a well-known fact that a woman of 16 has only got a couple of inches of fringe round the loins.<sup>303</sup>

Garland initially shaped his disagreement with African nakedness in terms of the displeasure of white women observers. Yet Millar's comment seems to imply that they do not mind male nudity particularly. Rather, female nakedness was deemed specifically problematic and debasing. This distinction between male and female nudity was not a lone occurrence in the debate. Indeed, the Charles Mitchell, the Colonial Secretary, asserted in 1880:

when one see the fine noble form of a naked Kafir and then sees in this city the same being clothes with a few rags such as an Italian *lazzarone* at Home would almost disdain to wear, that is sufficient to make those who have not indecent ideas and lewd thoughts own that the naked man was the far preferable spectacle of the two. As regards the women, I say nothing.<sup>304</sup>

Mitchell offers a description of indigenous manhood that is invested in an idea of the native existing in his 'natural state' rather than being corrupted by the bricolage that resulted from the contact zones of the mission field (and of colonial Natal at large). While potentially lionizing the attractiveness of indigenous clothing and bodies, it nonetheless reinforced an idea of African men and women both as inappropriately sensual and in need of consignment a separate imagined

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

space apart from European society. Mitchell's statement of course also offers a reinforcing of heteronormativity, arguing that a naked man was far more preferable as a spectacle than a scantily clad woman, as women would incite 'indecent ideas and lewd thoughts' in the minds of settler men. The nakedness of African men and women is gendered in these discussions as well; men are simultaneously lionized and denounced for their noble yet sexually threatening appearance. Women, on the other hand, are regarded as vehicles of lust in the eyes of settler men. While arguments were made primarily for the requiring of African clothing in the interests of civilization, the arguments simultaneously reveal the making of gender difference among Africans through settler legal systems.

At the same time that debates over the Clothing of the Natives Bill demonstrated gendered divisions in the policing of indigenous civilization, the legislators also argued over the nature of defining racial categories through dress. Michael Henry Gallwey, the Attorney General of Natal, cautioned that the law should be made applicable to all peoples regardless of race; Indians, Europeans and Africans should all be compelled through the law to wear clothing. In response, legislators complained that Indian workers were also violating civilizational demands for clothing. Mitchell disagreed further that the law was applicable at all, stating that, "the great empire of India has gone on for something like a century with Englishmen and Englishwomen submitting to the fact of Natives being very little more clothed than our Kafirs are here." Fellow legislator Mr. Mellersh concurred, arguing

Here, last week, or a little before, the whole of the Coolies were going stark naked, except for a little bandage round the loins, and nothing has been said about it. We never hear of any attempt to clothe the Coolies, and that is because they are afraid if any attempt of that kind were made it would stop their immigration here. So much for our morality. As to the Kafirs, I do not think they are a bit more indecent than the Indians.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., I:282.

Both Mitchell and Mellersh were challenged by other legislators who maintained that Indians as well as Africans should be clothed. Yet it is in this moment that the debates over the Bill most clearly reveal the attempts of settlers to define proper clothing and the status of nonwhite peoples within the colony. The Definition of the Natives Bill offers a competing side of civilizational discourse through mimicry, one that demonstrates the emergent categories of race and gender in its construction.

Reading the legal debates over the Clothing of Natives Bill, it is logical to assume that missionaries functioned only within the realm of discourse, unconnected to the larger political visibility of the settler project. Yet the case of John Colenso, the first Anglican Bishop of Natal, reveals that questions over civilization, propriety, and nativeness had significant import in the immediate jurisdiction of missionaries. As a space that hosted multiple positions of power and possibility simultaneously within colonial Natal, the mission field was able to accommodate the differing ideologies of a variety of groups—settlers, missionaries, and imperial officials alike. However, the process of missionization—the power of the Christian message to effect meaningful spiritual transformation within the hearts and minds of its hearers—depended upon an observable set of visible signs of domestic change, particularly from the intended indigenous audience. Yet, the coalitions that supported the mission field as a viable concept were fragile, and in particular could be upset by the idea of inappropriate proximity that challenge the nascent hierarchies that Natal's settler society sought to enact. The actions of John Colenso as well as the resultant colonial fury following his publication of commentaries on the Pentateuch and Romans between 1861 and 1864 reveal the limits of the mission field as a viable concept, particularly when the 'conditions of possibility' it engendered seemed to destabilize emergent hierarchies of race and gender within the colony. Colenso's theological innovations, and more

importantly the excessive closeness to indigenous peoples that facilitated them, revealed the precarious nature of missionization by directly confronting competing conceptions over the proper relations between European peoples and the indigenous communities they were to re-direct.

Initially arriving in 1854 and settling permanently into his new diocese a year later, Bishop Colenso was to serve as both the colonial bishop and the main coordinator for Anglican missionary efforts to the indigenous communities within Natal. At first, Colenso seemed to be an appropriate ecclesiastical choice; his reports back to the colonial metropole through the popular *Ten Weeks in Natal* were largely well-regarded and he enjoyed considerable popularity with the local settlers. The local settler community at Pietermaritzburg heaped praise upon Colenso, boasting:

Convinced that no progress, no prosperity, can be lasting, which is not founded upon and sanctified by pure religion...we have the fullest confidence that, under the blessing of God, your Lordship's presence amongst us will be attended with great and happy results.<sup>306</sup>

Yet even that effusive endorsement can be read with an eye to the approaching conflict.

Colenso's presence was celebrated by Natal's settler population for the religious blessing that he could confer upon settler progress. From such a perspective, Colenso existed primarily to meet the spiritual needs of the growing settler community with his indigenous mission work primarily restricted to aiding their achieving economic and social goals. While Colenso's arrival produced impressive shows of support, he also had his fair share of detractors from the beginning.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> "The Meeting to Welcome the Bishop," *Natal Witness*, February 10, 1854.

<sup>307</sup> According to Russell, a Dr. Johnston confronted Colenso at his very first public meeting, reportedly alarmed at early reports of *Ten Weeks* that had filtered back to the colonists. Johnston and a few other Durban residents were upset that Colenso would try to subvert the fragile state of settler society with unnecessary innovations; they were only mollified after considerable debate had taken place. George Russell, *History of Old Durban and Reminiscences of an Emigrant of 1850* (P. Davis and Sons, 1899), 236.

Despite general approval, several colonists did not take well to several of Colenso's statements in *Ten Weeks in Natal* concerning the education of indigenous Africans, the injustice of using native taxes for white colonial use, and his seeming reluctance to induce Zulus to serve as hired hands to colonists disturbed several prominent members of Durban and Pietermaritzburg society.

The amity between Colenso and the majority of the settler population in Pietermaritzburg (and much of the colony in general) did not last long; Colenso's plans as a missionary did not meet with much approval. Within the year, tensions between the bishop and the settler community were already apparent. George Russell witnessed a particularly heated exchange between the Bishop and leading Durban colonists in 1855, recording that "public sentiment had been worked up...regard[ing] the Bishop's advent...The liberty-loving, free speaking and thinking Colonist regarded this invasion of Clergy and lay sisters, with their spiritual head, as imposing an establishment upon them...and, from the incompetency of all the Mission party, certainly *dangerous to the Native population and peace of the Colony*."<sup>308</sup> The establishment of an official bishop threatened for some settlers the idea of colonial autonomy, which did not predispose them well for any innovations Colenso might make in regard to relations with the indigenous peoples.

Yet, despite these poor portents for the future, the early years of colonial Natal allowed for a degree of variety in settler and missionary approaches to indigenous peoples and the general state of the colony. For both groups, the mission project served to facilitate the development and Christianization of an indigenous population that they believed would soon become a minority within the larger colony, echoing events in contemporary settler colonial

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 237. The emphasis is my own.

states like British Columbia and New Zealand. Frictions between the two groups, while extant, were muted during the 1850s, as they could find points of agreement over larger issues like polygamy and alcohol, and both found justification and continued imperial approval through their claims to ‘transform’ the native. However, the exchange Russell reported remained significant for the fear that missionary meddling would prove ‘dangerous to the Native population and the peace of the Colony.’ Ultimately this clash, primarily over paternalistic claims to indigenous bodies and the increasing divergence between settler and missionary aims over the century, would become increasingly pronounced. One of the first obvious points of open rupture between competing visions for the colony would take place over the unorthodox theology and dangerous proximity of John Colenso.

Colenso’s deviation from broad points of civilizational consensus among settlers, British officials, and missionaries marked a perception of excessive proximity as well as undermined larger coalitions that supported the mission field as a crucial project in colonial Natal. As noted in Chapter 2, it was Colenso’s stance on polygamy that proved to be most controversial. Colenso himself argued in *Ten Weeks*:

I feel very strongly on this point, that the usual practice of enforcing the separation of wives from their husbands, upon their conversion to Christianity, is quite unwarrantable, and opposed to the plain teaching of our Lord... And what is the use of our reading to them the Bible stories of Abraham, Israel, and David, with their many wives?<sup>309</sup>

Particularly interesting in this case is Colenso’s use of scriptural authority to bind both settlers and indigenous people to patterns of behavior. By marking his theological interpretations soundly in scriptural crises (namely reading the accounts of the great patriarchs of the Jewish and Christian traditions), Colenso argued for a reluctant continuance of polygamous practice through

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<sup>309</sup> Colenso, *Ten Weeks In Natal*, 141.

appeal to a shared authority in scripture. The refusal to force new converts to surrender their wives, and Colenso's continued adherence to this belief, won him no friends from the settler community. For many of Natal's settlers, polygamy served both as a clear violation of Christian moral behavior as well as a marker of continued resistance to social improvement and economic coercion—except now they were being endorsed by their foremost spiritual leader and missionary bishop. This is more than mere anxiety at work here; the raced and gendered logics of settler colonialism—particularly, the ability to (re)produce heteronormative 'standards' of imagined 'home' in a new colonial space—was at stake for many colonists in the polygamy debate. Further, Colenso's justification of polygamy's limited continuance rested upon an idea of preserving indigenous families. To do so ran headlong into one of the central organizing concepts of the mission field—namely, the re-orienting of indigenous peoples away from 'improper' family connections into more readily legible formations that better served both the interests of settler capital and the moral pronouncements of religious observers. To fail to respond properly to such a threat ran the risk of being deemed too close to the corrupting influence of indigenous peoples, jeopardizing the entire colonial effort.

Consequently, the stakes were quite high for Bishop Colenso in his balancing act between settler and missionary interests. Any action that was interpreted by settlers as partial to Zulu interests over those of the colonial community would be seen as advancing a dangerous proximity to a heathen people that would jeopardize the imperial project in Natal. Decrying Colenso as "an experimentalist, and not over-informed in the histories and workings of Caffre marriages," Eliza Feilden worried that "the bishop's publishing a doubt upon the question will do harm. The Caffres begin to argue the question themselves, because the bishop's doctrine is

different from what the other missionaries have told them.”<sup>310</sup> In 1856, Durban’s leading citizens (several of whom would occupy positions in the colonial government in the following years) insisted that “Dr. Colenso was not fit to be a Bishop. His filthy pamphlet on Polygamy... was calculated to do more moral mischief than all the convicts that could be sent to the Colony.”<sup>311</sup> The increasing complaints against Colenso’s attentions to the Zulus illustrate the limits of acceptable deviation from the shared interests of settler and missionary communities regarding the repositioning of indigenous bodies. By making comparisons to the potential harm caused by importing convict laborers—a genuine fear of Natal’s settlers in the 1850s and 1860s—settler writers sought to directly link Colenso to other ideas of ‘improper’ whites that threatened the raced and gendered hierarchies of the colony. Unlike convicts, however, Colenso’s pro-polygamy, unorthodox thinking were interpreted as dangerous primarily due to their failure to maintain an appropriate distance between settler and indigenous modes of thought; settler critics viewed Colenso as enacting a particularly terrible betrayal of European hegemony through his excessive closeness to indigenous peoples.

By 1863, the year that Colenso’s religiously unorthodox interpretations of Biblical scripture erupted in new and lasting controversy, settler society had already roundly deserted the Bishop’s cause. Ultimately, his views on polygamy demonstrated a view that most settlers (and many missionaries) could not accept—they perceived his nuanced views as needlessly lax on the burning question of indigenous morality. More importantly, settlers and missionaries alike also viewed Colenso’s interpretations as being insufficiently dependent on physical transformation and too encouraging of indigenous independence from European re-orientation. The fear settlers

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<sup>310</sup> Feilden, *My African Home*, 270–71.

<sup>311</sup> Russell, *History of Old Durban and Reminiscences of an Emigrant of 1850*, 263.

expressed in colonial newsprint, journals, and letters of indigenous Africans disrupting the project envisioned by settlers and missionaries, with the support of renegade clergy like Colenso, echoes the shifts in attitudes toward ventures like Edendale by the 1880s as Natal's settlers sought to enact a minority regime of control that did not allow for the sharing of power with indigenous peoples.

## Conclusion

The larger hardening of racial attitudes in Natal after 1880 significantly undermined the consensus that conceived of the mission field as a space of possibility that could accommodate the aspirations of missionaries, the potential coercive power craved by settlers, the legitimacy claimed by colonial officials, and potential for some indigenous converts. "They are here as immigrants on sufferance, and are not citizens," thundered the editor of the *Natal Witness* in 1880, noting that precious few Africans had completed the arduous process of both acquiring exemption from Native Law as well as negotiating the byzantine laws that prevented black suffrage, proving themselves unfit "for the privilege of a citizenship they do not enjoy, have never demanded, and, perhaps, value but little?"<sup>312</sup> Although the transition itself did not occur immediately, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the 1880s demonstrate a particular shift in Natal politics, where settler claims were on the rise, imperial intervention on the decline, and missionaries and indigenous peoples both found themselves affected by an increasing move to restrict African access to land, power, and a share of genuine belonging in the colony.

Scholars have noted that Southern Africa, and the larger British imperial world, underwent a significant hardening in racial attitudes as the century wore on. Evangelical

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<sup>312</sup> "The Performance at Edendale," *The Natal Witness*, February 14, 1880.

humanitarianism and the ‘generosity’ of spirit demonstrated by British imperial officials and colonists around the globe appeared to be substantially on the wane by the end of the century, replaced by a dim pessimism regarding the closing of an ostensible ‘gap’ between the civilized capacity of Europeans and indigenous people.<sup>313</sup> Numerous factors have been used to discuss this ‘hardening,’ as coined by a variety of historians, ranging from substantial indigenous resistance in India (1857), Jamaica (1864), Afghanistan (1877), and southern Africa (1879) to the rise in evolutionary thinking and the ‘scientific’ recasting of racial difference to immutable characteristics. As part of a global discursive network, Natal was undoubtedly affected by these larger shifts. However, in addition to these global hardenings, Natal had its own local catalysts that facilitated a change in social attitudes, primarily on the part of white colonists.

Natal had been annexed by the British in 1843, and championed from mid-century as a new territory for white settler occupation. It was imagined by multitudes of Europeans as a space that, like contemporary colonies in North America and Australasia, would become a white-majority location, ready to be filled by settlers, who would soon become the majority of the population. While this came to pass in most other settler colonies, this particularly did *not* happen in Natal. Indeed, the population of indigenous peoples, through cross-border immigration and reproduction, skyrocketed, while the white population grew at a far slower pace. Throughout the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, settlers still believed that they would somehow become the proper majority of the society they hoped to build; in the years immediately following the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, this became far less certain. Indigenous people had not

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<sup>313</sup> Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa*; Dane Keith Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

only rather rudely refused to vanish,<sup>314</sup> they continued to resist settler desires to compel them into amenable labor relationships and continuously flouted social conventions through the survival of practices like polygamy and *ilobolo*. As a result, settlers began to accept their ‘failure’ at reproducing contemporary patterns of settlement, and instead began to seek to shore up their status as a minority regime, a process crystalized by the granting of Responsible Government to Natal’s Legislative Council in 1893.

Missionaries—as well as the mission field—were not immune to these shifting tides. As Esme Cleall maintains, “there is no doubt that changing registers of race altered the discursive web within which missionaries operated.”<sup>315</sup> Theological innovators who demonstrated excessive proximity, like Colenso, were shunned by larger settler society, and the rhetoric of later missionaries like the Catholic Trappists in the 1890s demonstrated a profound sense of white superiority over inherent, genetic black inferiority. More importantly, the mission field itself could no longer work as a larger coalition that encompassed the very different goals of settlers, missionaries, colonial officials, and the *amakholwa*. At the heart of the field’s failure lay the conception of indigenous converts as becoming ‘native settlers’ that could, through mimetic claims, be full citizens of a British imperial colony. The recognition of white minority rule by settler government, combined with a decrease in direct action by the imperial administration, rendered the idea advanced by Lady Barker as late as 1876, that of a transformed, Christianized black population filling Natal, impossible. Instead, stations like Edendale were denigrated as failed reproductions, and settler legislators worked in concert to block African purchase of land and ability to develop economic or political power in the colony.

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<sup>314</sup> As was certainly the case in all other settler colonies; however, Natal’s settler population lacked the simple demographic majority to even *pretend* that they were the only population in the colony.

<sup>315</sup> Cleall, *Missionary Discourses of Difference*, 163.

Ironically, as Robert Houle and Michael Mahoney have noted, the decline of African political maneuverability and the increasing restrictions also, finally, precipitated the drastic increase in conversions that missionaries had sought all this time.<sup>316</sup> The numbers of Christian converts had remained quite low throughout the nineteenth century, and a variety of factors led indigenous peoples increasingly to choose Christianity as a meaningful faith system that met their needs. Norman Etherington in particular points to the destruction of African social systems in the years directly following the Anglo-Zulu War as fundamentally undermining economic and social resistance to conversion, while Robert Houle has argued for a *longue duree* view of African Christianization that required multiple generations to inculcate indigenous teachers and allow Africans to shape the doctrines of Christianity to their own spiritual, social, and personal needs, echoing the claims of Peel earlier.<sup>317</sup> While both of these claims have respective merit, the primary point remains that Africans chose Christianity after significant material and economic transformation and amid increasing settler restriction.

And yet, while the mission field ceased to operate productively as a concept that could contain a variety of colonial actors, it does not mean that indigenous peoples failed to articulate their own demands and desires in light of the changing conditions in a ‘hardening’ Natal and global context at large. In 1899, Solomon Kumalo wrote to *Inkanyiso yaseNatal*, the newly constituted Zulu language newspaper run by missionaries, insisting:

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<sup>316</sup> Houle, *Making African Christianity*; Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*.

<sup>317</sup> Houle, *Making African Christianity*, xxxii–xxxvii; Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*; Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa, 1835-1880*.

We hear enough Good News in religious books and in the churches. In a newspaper, we desire news that both tells us of the government and official ministers as well as offers assistance for people here on earth.<sup>318</sup>

Kumalo's letter offers an indigenous challenge to the narrative of restricting rights and declining mission possibilities. In the pages of a mission newspaper, Kumalo asserted his status as an educated *kholwa* and demanded access to knowledge available readily to white readers. The potential goals of the mission project—of education and transformation paradoxically would allow an early generation of elite Africans to articulate identities and counter-colonial claims in print as the twentieth century dawned.

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<sup>318</sup> Solomon Kumalo, "Ku Mhleli We Nkanyiso," *Inkanyiso Yase Natal*, June 7, 1889. Original text: "Indaba ezimnandi sizizwa ngekwanelelyo ezincwadini ezingcwele (religious books) nasemasontweni. Epepeni lendaba (newspaper) silindele indaba zembuso, nezinye ezimalunga nosizo lwomuntu lapa emhlabeni."

**Chapter Five: ‘Every Inch a King’: The Metropolitan Circulations of Cetshwayo  
kaMpande, 1879-1884**

The final chapter of this dissertation embarks on a geographical shift in order to trace physical and discursive movements between metropolitan Britain<sup>319</sup> and colonial Natal in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This chapter focuses on depictions of Natal’s shifting political landscape in the 1870s and 1880s in the British metropolitan press. These depictions used larger discourses of race and gender, particularly in discussing the fate of the colony after the Anglo-Zulu War. These discourses, which circulated between the metropole and the colony, in turn shaped the political landscape in both places, and led to significant changes for settlers and indigenous peoples alike. Metropolitan writers paid particular attention to Cetshwayo kaMpande (r. 1873-79, 1883-84), the king of the independent Zulu nation until his deposition and exile by the British following the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Cetshwayo became a figure of recurrent media interest, particularly following his dethroning, exile, and successful 1882 visit to London to plead with Victoria for his restoration. The Zulu monarch’s display of dignity, composure, and bearing subverted the idea of rational, reasoned rule being the sole preserve of the white settler men who hoped to rule Natal. Cetshwayo’s deliberately scripted appearances in London as well as his sympathetic spokespeople across the empire played into pre-existing ideas of class and royal hierarchy to press the deposed monarch’s claim to the throne. However, the Zulu monarch (and his advocates) had to contend with an equally diverse array of opposition to his restoration and claims of authority.

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<sup>319</sup> By metropolitan, I mean, roughly, the area known as the ‘British Isles’ or in less popular instances, ‘the Atlantic Archipelago.’ In the nineteenth century, they were viewed as the two constituent islands that contained the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Imperial officials and colonial elites (particularly those serving in the Natal Legislature) challenged Cetshwayo's claims to royal authority. In the early 1880s, the enigmatic John Dunn (c. 1835-1895), the so-called "white Chief of Zululand," offered the most salient colonial and settler alternative to the claims of Cetshwayo and his allies in the metropolitan press. Dunn, a Southern African-born settler and trader who moved to Zululand in the 1850s, became an *induna* (headman or advisor) under Cetshwayo before reversing his allegiances during the Anglo-Zulu War. He later served as an officially appointed chief over a Zulu district under British sovereignty following Cetshwayo's defeat. In the Ulundi Settlement orchestrated by Sir Garnet Wolseley in 1879, Dunn was given a prominent position primarily due to his liminality—he was an ostensibly British man who also possessed a cultural and linguistic fluency among the Zulu people. A flurry of press activity surrounded Dunn in the 1880s, particularly as he sought to shore up his position in direct challenge to Cetshwayo's authority. This press coverage reveals that the partial takeover of Zululand in 1879 brought questions of British imperial power in southern Africa to the forefront of metropolitan conversations as both colonial officials and individual actors deployed white masculinity to justify and demarcate spaces of sovereignty.

As multiple observers sought to comprehend the stakes of the settler project in Natal and its resultant meaning for imperialism in general across a wide imperial network, the figure of Cetshwayo served as a touchstone for questions of imperial sovereignty and indigenous power. Prior to and during the war, Cetshwayo frequently appeared in print as an arbitrary and threatening savage, a danger to Natal's settlement, and by extension the British Empire. Yet as a king-in-exile, Cetshwayo kaMpande provided both a symbol of a 'martial race' that the British could safely esteem postbellum and a rallying point for a variety of critical responses to

imperialism and settlement.<sup>320</sup> Settler newspapers in Natal disparaged the king as a warmonger and threat to their hegemony, while elements within British elite circles—and ostensibly a wider reading public—clamored for the ennobled cause of a fallen potentate. Cetshwayo, too, certainly attempted to marshal these depictions for his own political purposes. Ultimately, the Zulu monarch resisted the will of the colonial administration in Natal, much to settler fury, by presenting favorably before London society and making claims on hierarchical rights as a monarch. Conversely, Dunn, Natal’s settler elites, and imperial administrators were defeated in their bid to enact a new political and social order following the defeat of the Zulu kingdom in 1879. Cetshwayo kaMpande’s movements (both in print and in person) between Ulundi, Durban, and London reveal the multi-sited nature of the settler project in colonial Natal and in the larger imperial world.

This chapter, then, focuses on fields of representation through which Cetshwayo emerged as a palimpsest for what good government should “look like” in Natal. Depictions of the king, which were debated continuously in the metropolitan press in the 1870s and 1880s, relied upon multiple contributors from a variety of perspectives, each attempting to use Cetshwayo to demonstrate proper imperial governance in the southeast African settler colony. Cetshwayo attracted attention from a variety of metropolitan and trans-imperial actors, from the noblewoman Lady Florence Dixie to the soon to be famous author Rider Haggard, from Magama Fuze, Christian convert and later author of the first published Zulu book, to Frances Colenso, daughter of the controversial Bishop of Natal. Each of these writers used discourses of race and

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<sup>320</sup> Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004).

gender while writing directly about the Zulu monarch in order to assert claims about proper government in Natal and the right kind of governance in the empire more widely.

When Cetshwayo kaMpande first set foot in London in August 1882, he stepped into this wider web of discourse about empire, race, and masculinity. The king's visit—and the simultaneous discussions of the occasion—catalyzed already ongoing conversations about the future of imperial rule, the conditions of settler government, and hierarchies of race and gender. While Cetshwayo and his supporters worked through the larger circulations of print media to return the king to power, and settlers on the ground worked alongside John Dunn to thwart this result, the stakes of Cetshwayo and his visit were about more than a restored kingdom. Rather, the circulations of Cetshwayo kaMpande—both in print and in person—between the metropole, Natal, and Zululand reveal that the failures of colonial hegemony did not occur simply in local colonial space, but rather, through the implementation of print technology, across discursive networks, and in the very heart of the empire itself. Hence, the *limits of settlement*—the failure of a settler state to completely gain its aims and objectives in relation to competing African indigenous polities, best represented in the person of Cetshwayo—occurred both in the colonial spaces of Natal as well as amid the popular presses of the metropole.

### **Reading Empire: Natal, Print, and the Question of Sovereignty**

As a prevailing and increasingly accessible technology of information, newspapers and periodicals in late nineteenth century Britain provide an invaluable window into the multilayered realities of imperial rule and colonial thought. As literary scholar Trish Loughran asserts, print culture “provides an explicitly materialist base from which to examine questions of

representation.”<sup>321</sup> As Richard Altick observed, while the story of the mass-print circulation in Britain was an incredible tale of numbers and subscribers, it was simultaneously a story of individual people finding personal solace and interest in the written word available to them.<sup>322</sup> Large numbers of people in the late nineteenth-century metropole read popular texts, and the depictions within them subsequently spread considerably, creating a powerful discursive web that responded to current events and shaped national reactions to them—both on a personal and a political level.

For centuries, newspapers and periodicals had offered a variety of information to a privileged readership in the British Isles, but access was not readily available for a significant percentage of the population prior to the nineteenth century. The broadening of the franchise in 1832 coincided with the gradual decreasing of taxes and subsidies on print and periodicals. By 1861 newspaper taxes and paper duties had finally been removed, and the costs of printed material plummeted within Britain.<sup>323</sup> By all accounts, the circulation of materials throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century is impressive, and indicative of a growing reading public. Most major London newspapers could claim anywhere between 50,000 and 200,000 readers in regular circulation by the 1870s, and other industrial centers like Manchester could boast at least a quarter million readers in regular circulation.<sup>324</sup>

The nineteenth century periodical in Britain provides a particularly useful opportunity for understanding how everyday Britons saw the empire that surrounded them. While it is difficult

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<sup>321</sup> Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U. S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), xviii.

<sup>322</sup> Richard Daniel Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 11.

<sup>323</sup> Altick, *The English Common Reader*.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 355–56.

to determine exactly how the individual British reader interpreted the news that appeared before him or her in the metropole, it is possible to observe broad trends in the information disseminated in the imperial press that these men and women would have read. As much of the awkwardly named ‘New Imperial History’ has sought to assert, nineteenth century Britain cannot be bifurcated into the easy dialectic of ‘domestic/local’ and ‘foreign/imperial’; the constant movement of bodies from the Isles to and from the corners of the globe meant that such a division was imagined at best. Yet newspapers and periodicals were where that very imagining occurred. Certainly the central preoccupation of ‘Englishness,’ the ostensible conservative core of the imperial project that conveniently elided Ireland, Wales, Scotland (and indeed much of England outside of the southeast) reinforces the fact that sub-national identity was constantly made and remade through recourse to empire.<sup>325</sup> Indeed, empire was everywhere, as countless British periodical references throughout the century can attest, but the empire became a site of intense argument, contention, and debate throughout the latter half of the century.<sup>326</sup>

The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 offered one such moment of national debate about empire. The long-running causes of the conflict, namely the overreach of former Secretary of Native Affairs Theophilus Shepstone in his new role as administrator of the newly-annexed Transvaal, the continuous demands of settlers for ‘security’ in the face of the threats of an autonomous Zulu

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<sup>325</sup> Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green, and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 128; Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>326</sup> This is not a universally held view among British historians. Bernard Porter and Richard Price have argued largely in favor of an insulated British public that was unaware and uninvolved in the acquisition of imperial territory. For Porter, such imperialism was ‘absent-minded,’ while for Price, it was evidence of a larger division between positive and insidious parts of imperialism. Yet the constancy with which imperial conquest and settlement figured in metropolitan texts leads me to conclude that imperialism was indeed an understood factor in contemporary metropolitan life. Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*.

kingdom, and the contradictory work of imperial officials that resulted in the destabilizing of Cetshwayo's hold on power, reverberated powerfully in the local spaces of the settler colony. The Anglo-Zulu War, and the resultant two decades of upheaval and social transformation, filtered back from the colonial boundaries of Natal and into the metropole's imagination by way of the printed page. In so doing, the localized, contested realities of settlement, indigeneity, and sovereignty were rendered anew in the pages read by an eager public from the streets of Belfast to Bristol, London to Leeds.

The close of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 opened new questions of British sovereignty over the unstable region. Ostensibly, Zululand did not come under the direct control of the British government. The Ulundi Settlement, named after the Zulu capital where it was declared, attempted to affect a form of compromise that retained Zululand's independence after the end of the war through the appointment of thirteen chiefs that ruled independently but with the approval of a British Resident.<sup>327</sup> This arrangement created a form of rule that historian Lauren Benton has described as "sovereignty [that] could be held by degrees... rather than signifying a quality that a state either possessed or failed to retain...with full sovereignty reserved for the imperial power."<sup>328</sup> The Ulundi Settlement, in effect, created a system of divided or mixed sovereignty, in which an independent Zululand was treated as a separate sovereign space, but at the discretion of British colonial officials. In a report to the Colonial Office, Sir Henry Bulwer, the Special Commissioner on Zulu Affairs, identified a central conflict in Zulu and British conceptions of sovereignty in the Ulundi Settlement:

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<sup>327</sup> Of the thirteen, eleven were lower-ranking Zulus traditionally opposed to Cetshwayo's rule, one was from a rival African tribe, and one was the erstwhile 'white Zulu,' John Dunn.

<sup>328</sup> Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 288.

The Zulu people...have been slow to understand, and it does not appear that they ever have fully understood, that the settlement of 1879 did not retain the authority of the British Government over them—‘The Government conquered us (they say), we belong to the Government.’...The appointed chief they have looked upon as simply appointed by that paramount authority to supervise and control them on behalf of the Government.<sup>329</sup>

This, for Bulwer, created a dangerous division in understandings of sovereignty. In his view, Zulu men and women did not view sovereign power, formerly in the hands of Cetshwayo as King, as something possessed by the appointed chiefs that British administrators like Wolseley had put in place. Rather, they shrewdly identified the imperial government as the retainer of full sovereignty, which severely hampered the amount of authority they offered to appointed chiefs like John Dunn.

In this unstable contest, imperial officials, settlers, and colonial frontiersmen like Dunn attempted to shore up white settler power in Zululand. Recognizing the limitations of a system of shared sovereignty, Bulwer argued that a more powerful assertion of authority was necessary:

It will not be sufficient to possess authority, it will be necessary to exercise it also. It will not be sufficient, I mean, that our authority should be a mere passive authority, allowing things to take their course and only interfering when it is appealed to. *It should be an active authority, an active moving power* for the good government of the country, guiding and controlling its affairs. It should be a visible authority, an authority seen and felt, in order that it may be a guarantee to the people of its reality and of the strong Government which is behind it.<sup>330</sup>

Bulwer contended that settler authority be vigorously asserted in a tumultuous colonial context. Such an assertion, as an ‘active authority, an active moving power’ that controlled the country, implied a form of masculine control; that local government officials should be able to marshal hierarchical male authority over the recent conquered Zulu kingdom. The contingency of settler sovereignty itself required imperial agents to move aggressively to control, shape, and order the peoples and lands north of the Thukela River. The ambiguous sovereignty of the Ulundi

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<sup>329</sup> BPP, C.3466: 79, enc., Henry Bulwer, “Settlement of Zulu Country,” August 25, 1882, p. 139-140

<sup>330</sup> Ibid, 140-141, emphasis added.

Settlement did not go unremarked in the metropole. The satirical London periodical *Funny Folks*, which offered some of the most biting and trenchant critiques of the contemporary geopolitical realities of the empire, opined about the lack of directly observable power in 1881 under the heading “Wanted, A King”:

Really, it's time that Cetywayo, or John Dunn, or Sir Bartle, or somebody were recognized as Grand Chief of Zululand. At present 'anarchy reigns' in that region, and ought to be deposed at once, unless the country is to degenerate into a complete bear-garden, or Zululogical pandemonium.<sup>331</sup>

Terrible puns aside, the writers at *Funny Folks* hit upon the central concerns of the settlement, specifically eyeing the challenges to colonial power and imperial legitimacy in the region. In the resultant political system orchestrated under Wolseley, Dunn (and men like him) would attempt to marshal the social legitimacy of his whiteness and masculinity to present an effective claim in such a contested space; these claims would soon be challenged by Cetshwayo and his many metropolitan supporters—all while under the watchful eye of the metropolitan press.

### **Savage or Sovereign?: Depictions of Cetshwayo kaMpande**

Cetshwayo first appeared in British newspapers in 1861, as rumors of a massive Zulu invasion reverberated from Natal’s settler press and across the print circuits of empire. Ultimately, this specter of war never materialized, but the name first became linked to fears of settler disruption and the destabilizing of the colonial project. Cetshwayo returned to metropolitan presses, again as a cause of concern for both the colony and imperial interests after installation as king by Theophilus Shepstone in 1872 and in the wake of skirmishes between the British and the neighboring Hlubi under Chief Langalibalele the following year. When John Robinson, the future Prime Minister of Natal, wrote to describe the colony for the metropolitan

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<sup>331</sup> “Wanted A King,” *Funny Folks*, November 26, 1881, 370.

press, he included a descriptor of Cetshwayo that at once praised the power and majesty of the king, while ambiguously outlining his position as a threat:

Northward, and abutting on our frontier, is Zululand, occupied by a people of remarkably developed warlike habits and prowess, under the rule of a man, Cetywayo, who for intelligence, power of organization, and military aptitude, might rank with any general of modern times. This chief is estimated to have under his command from 15,000 to 20,000 armed and trained warriors.<sup>332</sup>

This depiction of Cetywayo worked to both emphasize the power and positive qualities of the monarch as well as his potential for destruction. In such a formulation, Robinson translated settler goals in Natal to a wider metropolitan readership—while previously, Zulus may have threatened the nascent settler state they were to be rendered for a London audience as intriguing, martial curiosities. While settler papers like the *Natal Witness* and *Natal Mercury* thundered in the colony against the ‘threat’ of indigenous Africans, settler reports in London used the Zulus as a picturesque selling point to the metropolitan reader. Likewise, Cetshwayo was not depicted as savage or degraded, but rather as powerful, intelligent, and well-organized. A metropolitan reader would take note of this glowing endorsement of the Natal colony, that even included a positive (and very settlerlike) description of the indigenous peoples whom the settlers themselves sought to replace.

This positive treatment was certainly not to last, however. As the imperial press dutifully reported, the working arrangement between the colony of Natal, the Boer Republic of the Transvaal, and the independent Zulu kingdom rapidly shifted from 1877 to 1879. In 1877, the British government, in pursuit of Lord Carnarvon’s South African confederation strategy, moved to annex the Transvaal, installing the triumphant Theophilus Shepstone as their representative. This was to have drastic repercussions for relations between Natal and Cetshwayo, and British

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<sup>332</sup> John Robinson, “Settlers and Natives in South Africa,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 7, 1870.

metropolitan depictions shifted accordingly. For decades, the British had been supporting the Zulus in their competing territorial claims with the Transvaal. However, now in possession of the Transvaal, the British imperial government, and Shepstone in particular, reversed course and supported the Boer claims to part of a region that Cetshwayo (and the Zulu government in general) believe to be legitimately theirs. The turnaround of the British on the Boer/Zulu land claims heightened tensions between the two polities, and amid cries of treachery from Zulu observers, Natal settlers began to prophesy invasion and destruction.

It is in this intervening period that British depictions of Cetshwayo shifted along with the political fortunes of the day. While some newspapers, reporting on conditions in Natal, still stressed that the Zulu monarch was intelligent and a capable manager of military commands, the discourse also highlighted how many men Cetshwayo might bring to bear on his enemies.<sup>333</sup> Border conflicts with the amaSwazi north of Zululand and the amaPondo people south of Natal appeared in British newspapers as the responsibility of Cetshwayo's nefarious plotting.<sup>334</sup> Multiple newspapers ran the very simple announcement, "Cetywayo continues to observe an attitude of covert hostility to the English," as part of their foreign news reports in September 1878.<sup>335</sup> By depicting Cetshwayo as truculent, arbitrary, and despotic, the metropolitan print media rendered the king a figure of immature masculinity or dangerous, unchecked black male power. The combination of Cetshwayo's military strength with his ostensibly unpredictable and illegible actions portrayed in British presses prepared a readership for the possibility of colonial warfare and created a ready market for sensationalist literature about the depredations of a

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<sup>333</sup> "The Zulu Kaffirs and the Transvaal Annexation," *Daily News*, January 17, 1878.

<sup>334</sup> "South Africa," *Liverpool Mercury*, September 19, 1878; "South Africa," *Reynold's Newspaper*, September 22, 1878; "Second Edition," *Western Mail*, September 27, 1878.

<sup>335</sup> "Foreign Intelligence," *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, September 23, 1878; "Latest News," *The York Herald*, September 23, 1878; "The Cape Colonies," *The Standard*, September 23, 1878.

savage chieftdom. In so doing, British readers could imagine themselves as righteously involved in a military struggle not in favor of continued settler colonial ambition, but as a crusade of freedom against an arbitrary dictatorship.<sup>336</sup>

As the tenor of the press began to clamor more and more for war, describing Cetshwayo as a violent and unpredictable barbarian, the king's supporters in Natal sought to fire back against these accusations. In March of 1878, *Macmillan's Magazine*, a popular and prestigious London periodical, published "A Visit to King Ketshwayo," a lengthy account of a visit to the Zulu king by Magera Fuze, the Zulu intellectual and later author of the first major Zulu history, *Abantu Abamnyama: lapa bavela ngakona*. Fuze's piece was prefaced by a short passage from John Colenso, the Bishop of Natal, whose theological innovations and lengthy ecclesiastical trial made him quite well-known in London reading circles (indeed, *Macmillan's* had published a refutation of Colenso's controversial religious opinions fifteen years prior).<sup>337</sup> Colenso's short introduction served to establish Fuze as a trustworthy, intellectual observer of the events in Zululand, and the bishop took care to note that his protégé's own isiZulu text had been 'literally translated.'<sup>338</sup> "A Visit to King Ketshwayo" is an invaluable piece, precisely as it represents an indigenous African opinion of the Zulu king (albeit mediated through Colenso) at a moment of increasingly agitated press and military posturing towards Cetshwayo. In his recounting of the visit to Zululand, Fuze took pains to note Cetshwayo's amenable attitude regarding the British

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<sup>336</sup> This is not a unique move in imperial history. As historian Lauren Benton has documented, sovereignty is often made through a series of competing claims and counter claims, and often legitimated through claims of protection from tyrants or despots antithetical to the aspirant imperial state. Lauren Benton, "Protection, Empire, and Global Order in the Early Nineteenth Century" (Lecture presented at the Center for Advanced Study 2013-2014 Initiative Presentation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, March 3, 2014); Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*.

<sup>337</sup> George J. Worth, *Macmillan's Magazine: 1859 - 1907*; "No Flippancy Or Abuse Allowed" (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2003). For more on Colenso and his controversial innovations, see chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation.

<sup>338</sup> Magera Fuze (Magwaza), "A Visit to King Ketshwayo," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1878, 421.

colonial polities bordering his kingdom, and emphasizes the rationality and cool-headed decision making of the monarch:

It is right that all people should know that Ketswayo loves his people; he does not at all wish that they should kill one another, or that he himself should kill them. He has altogether abandoned the policy of Tshaka and Dingane, and carries on that of the English in earnest. ...During all the time that I stayed in Zululand I saw Ketswayo sitting in his seat, judging the causes of his people, and his judgment was excellent and satisfactory.<sup>339</sup>

In his firsthand account, Fuze offered a direct refutation of the predominant metropolitan press narrative of a reckless, dangerous Cetshwayo. By emphasizing the respectability of his rule, one that was “of the English in earnest,” Fuze re-centered the monarch in imperial debates, paradoxically holding out an idea of an acculturated Zulu king bridging the divide between colonial Natal and independent Zululand.

As historian Hlonipha Mokoena has noted, Fuze’s description of Cetshwayo reveals a nuanced and original synthesis of colonial coercion and indigenous autonomy.<sup>340</sup> Much of the initial press furor surrounding Cetshwayo had centered on his threatening of Zulu converts, primarily as missionaries argued that their conversion released them from relationships of obligation to the Zulu king and military, a direct threat to Cetshwayo’s power. Well-aware of the colonial double-standard that allowed for indigenous conversion at the expense of royal power, Cetshwayo reveals to Fuze his general acceptance of religious conversion, but not at the cost of his kingship. Cetshwayo argues that missionaries “had better go and make converts of the soldiers of [their] own people first, and after that these people of ours may be converted.”<sup>341</sup> Explicitly rejecting the claims of missionaries and settlers that Cetshwayo was threatening the lives of Zulu converts, Fuze and the king repositioned the fulcrum of African power by

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>340</sup> Hlonipha Mokoena, *Magema Fuze: The Making of A Kholwa Intellectual* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 164–66.

<sup>341</sup> Fuze (Magwaza), “A Visit to King Ketswayo,” 426.

acknowledging potential acceptance of conversion while simultaneously emphasizing the requirement of converts to submit to Zulu authority. True conversion, the Christian Fuze noted in his conversation with Cetshwayo, is not “when people cast off the power which is appointed to rule over them, and despise their king, and go and live with the missionaries.”<sup>342</sup> In his published attempt to counter the prevailing negative press regarding Cetshwayo, Fuze and Cetshwayo both articulated a radical potential view of imperialism that privileged indigenous autonomy while still accepting British ideas of religious conversion and ‘proper governance. Such provocative, thoughtful analysis remained a minority view in the deluge of anti-Cetshwayo writing that characterized much of metropolitan press coverage in the late 1870s.

During the two years prior to the outbreak of war in Natal the metropolitan press found one particular, convenient theme for emphasis in their discussion of Cetshwayo. With numbing regularity journalists described Cetshwayo as an arbitrary and wanton despot, whose whims were terrifying, bloodthirsty, and capricious. As the imperial war machinery began to grind into gear, amplified by the hysterical screeching of Natal’s settler elites and urged by the short-term geopolitical goals of the confederation-minded officers in the Colonial Office, the familiar rhetoric of indigenous savagery and oppressive feudal rule began to apply to Cetshwayo routinely and loudly. Newspapers in early 1879 continued to trumpet that Cetshwayo was a “bloodthirsty savage” who did not value life but reveled in capricious killings of his own people.<sup>343</sup> Echoing the predominant tone set in metropolitan papers, periodicals aimed toward a young male readership stridently repeated the savage, despotic allegations against Cetshwayo’s person.

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>343</sup> “Some Talk About Cetewayo,” *Illustrated Police News, Etc*, June 21, 1879.

Publications like *Boy's Own Paper* and *Boys of England* quickly sought to capitalize on the widespread name recognition of the Zulu monarch and began to publish yarns following the outbreak of war in early 1879 that emphasized Cetshwayo's cruel, arbitrary nature. *Boys of England* ran a serialized adventure story that valorized a young white hunter in Natal who encountered a bestial and lecherous Cetshwayo with an evidenced predilection for vulnerable white women. In the serialized story, Cetshwayo is "chosen as a fit representative of the line of despots" that characterize the savage Zulu nation; he celebrates his coronation by immediately killing all threatening relatives and rivals, for his amusement and that of his "three thousand wives."<sup>344</sup> *Boys' Own Paper* offered a somewhat nuanced view:

Ketchwaio, the fine, majestic-looking *noble savage*, [who] has proved himself a ruthless, *cruel*, and barbarous despot, thinking nothing of sending out his regiments, and the men of these regiments are not allowed to marry until they average forty years of age, *unless the whole regiment have dipped their assegais in blood!* This barbarous law, of course, makes them dangerous and quarrelsome neighbours to the white colonists of Natal and the Transvaal.<sup>345</sup>

The author described Cetshwayo as noble, and majestic, denoting his positive traits as a powerful leader and ruler of men and reinforcing respect for hierarchical distinctions and forms of masculine power, even if they are arrayed by a nonwhite enemy. However, the paper also sought to teach young British boys that Cetshwayo's limiting of proper marriages for men while simultaneously overindulging violence constituted unsuitable forms of male behavior, and instead justified the conquest of Zululand by ostensibly civilized imperial forces. Significantly, the passage ends in framing the removal of Cetshwayo not in terms of protecting African peoples from a tyrant, but in protecting 'white colonists' from the predations of an unchecked indigenous ruler.

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<sup>344</sup> "The White Tiger Chief of the Zulus," *Boys of England: A Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction for the Youths of All Nations*, March 14, 1879.

<sup>345</sup> M.C.H., "The Coronation of the Zulu King," *The Boy's Own Paper*, May 10, 1879.

The war thrust the Zulu people and their leader, Cetshwayo, to the forefront of British popular imagination, particularly after the disastrous defeat of imperial troops at Isandhlwana in January of 1879.<sup>346</sup> The rhetoric of war intensified following the battle, and continued discussions of Cetshwayo's 'barbarous' nature and the militant chaos of the Zulu kingdom filled press pages throughout the spring and summer of 1879. However, with the arrival of Sir Garnet Wolseley in August and the capture of Ulundi in September of 1879, British press depictions of Cetshwayo began to shift. No longer was he seen simply as a destructive and capricious despot. Rather, having lost power as a result of military invasion, periodical press pages seemed rather inclined to memorialize the valor of the Zulu military in retrospect. Following his capture in September and exile in the Cape Colony, Cetshwayo became a source of continuous debate about the limits of both colonial settlement and imperial hegemony.

The two years following Cetshwayo's capture emphasized instead the royal dignity of the captive as press writers debated the very legitimacy of the British invasion, often to the white-hot fury of Natal's settler observers. The frequently prescient satirical periodical *Funny Folks* well-described the rapid shift in press coverage following Ulundi in a note just a month after the end of the war:

The danger is that we shall wind up the farce by a ridiculous display of hero-worship on Cetywayo's account. Already the Turncoat press discovers that Cetywayo was 'every inch a king,' but 'never showed so royal as when the other day he stepped out from his hiding—place' —he did, in effect, crawl out of his kraal—'and , with a proud demeanour that struck his pursuers with admiration and melted them to sympathy, surrendered himself a prisoner. The Zulu nation recovered by that one supreme effort of their fallen King much of the dignity which had once pertained to them as the noblest native race of Africa, Royal to the last, and at the last more royal than ever,' &c, &c.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> The defeat of the finest soldiers of the Empire at the hands of 'savage' warriors certainly can be viewed as a crisis of masculine authority for the British metropolitan reading public, one visible in the rhetoric of the metropolitan press.

<sup>347</sup> "The Triumph of Cetywayo," *Funny Folks*, October 4, 1879, 316.

Following the close of the war, Cetshwayo ceased to be the threatening barbarian that stood ready to despoil Natal (at least to metropolitan eyes—for the majority of settlers in Natal, Cetshwayo represented ever-present threats of colonial ruin for the rest of his life). Rather, a new period of myth-making began in which Cetshwayo's noble status and royal authority would be privileged, now that he was no longer perceived by many to present a military threat to British interests in southern Africa. This new, pro-Cetshwayo argument would instead advocate for the restoration of the monarch, offering a vision of colonialism in Natal and imperialism more widely that rested upon notions of justice, fair play, and hierarchical order. This, of course, would be utterly inimical to the coalition of settlers, colonial officials, and other interested parties that were invested in the Ulundi Settlement struck by Wolseley in 1879. For administrators like Wolseley, a restoration of Cetshwayo would undo his grandiose designs for peace in the colony. For many settlers, Cetshwayo's return would reignite a threat to their sovereignty and serve as a rallying point for indigenous disaffection. Arguing that "the interests of peace and order in South Africa would be seriously imperiled," Natal's legislators voted each to pass a formal protest at the idea of Cetshwayo's Return every year from 1880 to 1883.<sup>348</sup> Although their interests were not uniform, each of these groups shared a profound attachment to the idea of Cetshwayo's continued exile; the restoration of the monarch would, therefore, spell the undoing of their tenuous plans for Natal and Zululand. With this in mind, interested groups would begin their own press offensive, intent on demonstrating the security of the region in a post-Cetshwayo era. One of the most salient means of expressing that security lay within the curious, contradictory figure of John Dunn, who had been appointed one of the thirteen 'kinglets'

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<sup>348</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: First Session--Ninth Council, from October 20 to December 22, 1880*, vol. II (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis and Sons, 1881), 184.

over Cetshwayo's former realm.<sup>349</sup> Dunn would become a central point of discussion and debate in metropolitan papers in the early 1880s. The ambiguities of Dunn's racial identification and 'proper' masculinity were utilized to incite interest in the curiosity of the 'white chief' as well as in the future of imperial rule in Natal and Zululand.

### **Race, Masculinity, and the Competing Claims of John Dunn**

In addition to discussing Cetshwayo, metropolitan papers also debated his potential replacement, John Dunn. British newspaper readers debated the figure of John Dunn and larger questions of British authority throughout the empire, illustrating the importance of racialized forms of masculinity to questions of sovereignty and challenging binaries of metropole and colony. By 1879, the Anglo-Zulu War had placed the relatively obscure colony of Natal firmly within the center of imperial conversation. The Zulus, particularly after their crushing victory over the British at Isandhlwana in January, filled British newspapers, periodicals, and conversations. While revelatory literature written by settlers to describe the new colony of Natal and its mysterious, 'savage' indigenous peoples had been popular in the 1850s and 1860s, periodicals now described the martial valor of the Zulus and the frustrating attempts of the imperial military to contain them. It is in this context of increased speculation and curiosity that the image of John Dunn surfaces. Although he lived his entire life in southern Africa, Dunn offered a particularly intriguing contradiction for imperial readers: he was a British man who voluntarily chose to live outside the colony's boundaries, both physically and socially. Yet the image of Dunn in popular media was hardly a singular or cohesive one. Metropolitan depictions of Dunn illustrate larger debates over sovereignty, race, and masculinity reverberating

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<sup>349</sup> Although he was one of thirteen rulers, Dunn controlled easily the largest territory, approximating up to a third of pre-invasion Zululand.

throughout the empire at the height of imperial expansion. These images helped to shape a transnational imperial arena in which debates about the gendered and racialized nature of imperial rule were played out, revealing the stakes of “unsettled” territory as well as capacity of bodies claimed as both black and white might shape the limits of settlement.

“Who is John Dunn, the Zulu chief?” opined the author of a London gossip column in 1879. “I hear many people ask.”<sup>350</sup> For many an inquisitive metropolitan observer, Dunn was a confounding figure indeed. During the Anglo-Zulu War, Dunn’s name appeared repeatedly in British periodicals as people attempted to comprehend this strange, liminal figure and the nature of imperial rule.<sup>351</sup> Dunn represented many different things in the eyes of British readers. He may have been viewed as a romantic figure in the midst of a distant war. Or, for some, he embodied an idea more sinister—that British men could be corrupted by excessive proximity to the Zulus, failing at attempts to impose sovereignty over them. The idea that the powerful Zulu could convert (or corrupt) erstwhile stalwart imperial agents held great purchase and added greater urgency to the question—“who is John Dunn, the Zulu Chief?”

After the Anglo-Zulu War, Dunn’s subsequent position as chief of the largest of the thirteen independent Zulu chiefdoms earned him the intense scrutiny of the British press. Dunn’s position was officially that of a British colonial administrator, yet he *also* served as a chief. To several observers, ‘Chief Dunn’ seemed a destructive mix of British officialdom and indigenous degeneracy. “There was now another difficulty by John Dunn,” reported the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* in 1882, “being put by the English Government over Zulus as a

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<sup>350</sup> “Chat of the Gossips,” *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (London, England), Saturday, October 04, 1879; pg. 215; Issue 949.

<sup>351</sup> Dunn appeared in British newspapers and periodicals at least five thousand times between 1875 and 1895. However, Cetshwayo’s name appeared about four times as frequently in the same period.

chief...[for he was] a white man, an Irishman, who was worse than a Kaffir, and lived like one, and so many wives bought with cattle.”<sup>352</sup> Nor was the *Weekly Journal* the only newspaper to share this view. Critical to John Dunn’s negotiation of both Zulu chieftaincy and British citizenship were his acceptance of Zulu women as wives in addition to his original wife, the mixed-race Catherine Pierce Dunn.<sup>353</sup> Dunn’s polygamy provided the primary reason that metropolitan newspapers viewed his hybrid position as something dangerous and unnatural. Dunn was derided as a “renegade polygamist, the white man with the score of black wives,” and editors demonstrated little confidence in a “Scotch pagan’s ‘civilising influence’” among the Zulus he was supposed to improve morally.<sup>354</sup> The *Liverpool Mercury* acidly summed up the new Chief as “remarkable proof of the power of races to degenerate, Chief John Dunn, the Presbyterian polygamist.”<sup>355</sup> Dunn’s polygamy was problematic for multiple reasons—it was viewed as a fundamentally non-Christian practice, and it appeared to be a thorough corruption of British masculine domestic order. To an imperial news writer, Dunn had neglected to maintain a level of proper British distance, had failed at exercising control over his sexual desires, and had acted out of accord with societal norms. His sexuality, on display via his non-white wives, was overpowering rather than rationed, reasoned, or controlled, as befitting a proper British administrator or gentleman. His hybrid position would not advance proper order, or the extension of British discipline and civilization in a remote tropical corner of the empire; rather,

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<sup>352</sup> “Bishop Colenso’s Work in Africa: Extraordinary Revelations,” *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland), Wednesday, February 4, 1880; Issue 7790.

<sup>353</sup> Catherine Dunn, John Dunn’s first and ‘principal wife,’ was born of an interracial marriage in Port Natal and had known her husband since their childhood, moving with him to the Natal frontier in the 1850s.

<sup>354</sup> “Our London Correspondence,” *Liverpool Mercury etc* (Liverpool, England), Monday, April 10, 1882; Issue 10686.

<sup>355</sup> “Our London Correspondence,” *Liverpool Mercury etc* (Liverpool, England), Monday, April 17, 1882; Issue 10692.

for some periodical writers (and readers) Dunn demonstrated a dangerous and ultimately ‘foreign’ influence.

As a British reading public attempted to make sense of the multiple signifiers that John Dunn made available as the grounds for his role as British administrator and/or Zulu chief, his ethnic identity (and therefore whiteness) appeared to be quite fluid in metropolitan newsprint. While occasionally termed an ‘Englishman,’ this was often modified by another descriptor—“unusual,” “polygamist,” or “long resident with the Zulus.”<sup>356</sup> More frequently, Dunn was described as Scottish or Irish.<sup>357</sup> While the confusion over Dunn’s origin may be attributable both to his childhood in a sparsely settled region and his common surname, the frequent label as Scottish or Irish is significant. As an Irish or Scottish man, Dunn could perhaps be better explained as a less than a properly ‘English’ (and assuredly white) subject. The most fanciful of the Dunn depictions can be found in an 1879 edition of the *Belfast News-Letter*, which invented a convoluted, fascinating, and utterly false life story for the famous chief. The *News-Letter* opened by asserting vehemently that Dunn was an Irishman from county Tyrone, who “left his native country, and was not heard of for a number of years,” before fighting in the American Civil War and Franco-Prussian War, overthrowing the Bonaparte dynasty, and conducting

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<sup>356</sup> “Chat of the Gossips,” *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (London, England), Saturday, October 04, 1879; pg. 215; Saturday, November 29, 1879; “John Dunn, the Zulu Guide,” *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland), Wednesday, April 23, 1879; Issue 7542.

<sup>357</sup> Multiple issues of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, and the *Liverpool Mercury* state (often conflictingly) that Dunn is Irish or Scottish (or both). The 1883 murder of infamous Irish informer James Carey in Cape Town by Irish nationalist Patrick O’Donnell led to wild speculations that the murder had been somehow committed with the collusion of “John Dunn, of Zulu fame, an old Fenian, and a Dublin man.” see “The Murder of James Carey,” *Western Mail* (Cardiff, Wales), Wednesday, August 1, 1883; Issue 4437, and “The Assassination of Carey,” *Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham, England), Wednesday, August 1, 1883; Issue 7825.

smuggling runs for the Portuguese before arriving in Zululand via Mozambique.<sup>358</sup> This narrative made for a compelling (if untrue) story, but it also linked John Dunn with a sense of utter foreignness and distinctly liminal whiteness. For British observers, late nineteenth-century Ireland represented a continuous case of confusion over sovereignty; Dunn's foreignness and his disputed claims over a divided sovereignty over the Zulus is well explained in an Irish analogy. In a sense, Dunn's multiple border crossings were even more firmly emphasized in the Belfast story, and the sovereignty-confusing chief instead became deterritorialized and potentially deracinated as a result.

While some metropolitan observers focused on Dunn's distance from both social and political boundaries within the British Empire, others emphasized aspects of Dunn that showed him to be a proper, acceptable white man. "Is John Dunn so black, in a metaphorical sense, as he has been painted lately?" reported the *Belfast News-Letter*, tongue firmly in cheek:

Does he really conceive that the chief duties of a Zulu kinglet consist in amassing money and being very much married? He may lay himself open to censure under both heads, but a letter from Dunnsland, in a Natal paper, represents the polygamous John in a somewhat more flattering light. What other chief is there in South Africa, for instance, who devotes any part of his revenues to road-making? King John does that, at all events, and his efforts are said to have already produced a great change for the better. He has also set his face sternly against traffic in drink, and in that respect, too, he compares favourably with other chiefs. With regard to the administration of justice, the Dunn system is rough and ready, but, on the whole, reasonably efficient.<sup>359</sup>

While the author readily admitted the irregularities of Dunn's polygamy and position as chief, he emphasized the ways in which Dunn brought order to his chiefdom (notably the author used Dunn's own term, *Dunnsland*, which implies both ownership and a paternal domination of the region). Dunn is credited with drawing physical lines across his territory in the form of roads

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<sup>358</sup> "John Dunn, the Zulu Organizer, a County Tyrone Man," *The Belfast News-Letter* (Belfast, Ireland), Wednesday, April 30, 1879; Issue 19859.

<sup>359</sup> "The Army," *The Belfast News-Letter* (Belfast, Ireland), Friday, June 16, 1882; Issue 20883.

linking the region to greater commerce and civilization. He was also seen as providing justice and stability, in effect, directing Zulu men and women to follow lines of British progress.

Likewise, in his 1883 travel narrative, British essayist and novelist Bertram Mitford wrote glowingly of Dunn's ability to bring order to the Zulus through his control of their access over liquor:

I emphatically assert that on the ground of his proscription of the liquor traffic alone, John Dunn is entitled to the thanks of all true philanthropists, and whatever may be his shortcomings in other respects, this would go far towards whitewashing them....[There] are no canteens, and instead of the slouching, drunken barbarian of the Cape border, you find the well-made, intellectual-looking Zulu, with his open greeting and cheery smile--a savage also, but a fine savage.<sup>360</sup>

Mitford argued that Dunn's work to curb drinking demonstrated a commitment to creating an effective, industrious work force that would dutifully obey the commands of the imperial power, in effect, fulfilling Dunn's self-proclaimed role as a restrained and orderly patriarch. Such a write-up in the metropolitan press reinforced discourses prominent in Natal that used liquor laws as a means of signifying racial and civilizational difference.<sup>361</sup> For some authors, Dunn could circumvent (or 'whitewash') the unnatural and foreign nature of his excessively Zulu lifestyle through his ability to make Zulus into sober, hard-working subjects 'in line' with the requirements of the Empire.<sup>362</sup> Dunn's ability to make Zulus 'line up' allows, as Ahmed asserts, colonial "bodies to extend into spaces that, as it were, have already taken their shape."<sup>363</sup>

British authors who travelled to South Africa to meet Dunn were struck by his physical appearance. In *Through the Zulu Country*, published in London in 1883, Mitford described in detail the Dunn he saw:

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<sup>360</sup> Bertram Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country: Its Battlefields and Its People* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883), 201.

<sup>361</sup> For more on this, see Chapter 3.

<sup>362</sup> This was, however, clearly contested by Zulus themselves, who often had their own agendas at stake in a rising capitalist economy, something few white observers ever cared to notice. See Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*, 2-4.

<sup>363</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.

John Dunn is a handsome, well-built man, about five feet eight in height, with good forehead, regular features, and keen grey eyes; a closely cut iron-grey beard hides the lower half of his bronzed, weather-tanned countenance, and a look of determination and shrewdness is discernible in every lineament. So far from affecting native costume, the chief was, if anything, more neatly dressed than the average colonist, in plain tweed suit and wideawake hat.<sup>364</sup>

Mitford took pains to describe Dunn's *ordinariness*; rather than 'affect' the clothing of a Zulu, Dunn instead dressed in easily recognizable clothes that were actually of higher quality than an 'average colonist.' This description served to counter ideas that Dunn's irregularity from polygamy or Zulu residency had affected the 'core' man. Likewise, Walter Ludlow, whose 1882 *Zululand and Cetewayo* went through two London editions in 1882, found himself reassured by Dunn's 'normalcy' in physical appearance:

His age would be about forty. He was dressed in grey tweed, with long Wellington boots and a gray tweed shooting cap over a remarkably handsome but bronzed countenance, with a broad forehead, finely-cut features, and closely-trimmed light brown beard and moustache. The greeting was kindly and cordial, and but for the surroundings you might have taken him to be an English country squire going round his farm.<sup>365</sup>

While Mitford compared Dunn to other colonists, Ludlow asserted that Dunn resembled a classic English gentleman. This description furthered the notion of Dunn as a true Englishman transplanted successfully in foreign soil. These travel narratives, evidently popular due to their multiple printings, served as orientation devices for metropolitan readers. Describing Dunn in tweeds rather than 'customary' clothing provided a form of comfort to a British audience, which expected to see white bodies that matched the very bodies that they themselves possessed. By emphasizing Dunn's paternalistic care of the 'othered' Zulus and describing his familiar country dress (and *none* of his wives), metropolitan authors enabled "whiteness...to function as a form of public comfort by *allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape*."<sup>366</sup>

<sup>364</sup> Mitford, *Through the Zulu Country: Its Battlefields and Its People*, 197.

<sup>365</sup> Walter Robert Ludlow, *Zululand and Cetewayo*, 2nd ed. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and co., 1882), 58.

<sup>366</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 135. Emphasis original.

Although appointing Dunn as chief proved amenable to the immediate concerns of the British administrators in Natal, the unorthodox appointment certainly failed to find universal acceptance from white settlers, Zulu peoples, or metropolitan observers, an insecurity that Cetshwayo and his supporters attempted to capitalize upon. Indeed, a vocal white contingent within Natal instead asserted that the war had been unjust and a restored Cetshwayo (with considerable British surveillance and civilizing influence) would be a more appropriate means of ordering the former Zulu kingdom. Aware of the tenuous nature of the Ulundi Settlement and anxious to field his chief rival, Dunn wrote directly to the Earl of Kimberley at the Colonial Office against Cetshwayo's reinstatement, asserting that the return of the deposed monarch would have immediate implications for British reputation as well as claims to sovereignty over the region:

I beg also to bring to your Lordship's notice the injury such a step will be to the prestige of all Englishmen and any English Government in future in this part of Africa, and that it cannot tend to the peace and welfare of the English race, neither of the natives, and will eventually lead to a great deal of bloodshed.<sup>367</sup>

In this letter, Dunn insisted that Britain's colonial future is at stake in the debate over Cetshwayo's restoration. He argued that if the king returned, imperial agents such as Dunn would be unable to fulfill their duties, namely maintaining order and continuing to mark out space for settlement and control—responsibilities uniquely suited to the white British male administrator. In Dunn's estimation, the return of Cetshwayo threatened newly claimed semi-sovereign spaces of imperial rule as well as the central logic of British intervention in Zululand itself. Dunn asserted that restoring the king would be a surrender of supremacy in the region, both political and symbolic. By threatening bloodshed and ruin, Dunn recalled the rationale of

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<sup>367</sup> BPP, C.3466: 79a, Chief John Dunn to the Earl of Kimberley, August 26, 1882, p. 154.

the initial invasion—to maintain the safety and order of Natal and British aims in southern Africa.

“The minds of the public are so much poisoned against me in England,” Dunn wrote morosely in 1882, noting the increasing support for Cetshwayo’s return in the metropole as the year progressed.<sup>368</sup> While Dunn and his fellow pro-Settlement campaigners had reason to be discouraged by the volume of press in favor of Cetshwayo and opposed to Dunn’s activities, such a negative assessment was not entirely accurate. Certainly, Dunn’s transgressive lifestyle, his attempts to assert his rights as a Zulu chief with the moral authority of a British official, left him open to withering criticism and rejection. But Dunn was also a figure of curiosity throughout an imperial discursive network where commentators routinely wrestled with the incompleteness of the colonial project. He was unnatural, he was frequently foreign, he was dubious; yet to others he was reassuringly British, a transplanted country gentleman carving out roads in the veldt and molding Zulus into sober, empire-directed workers. Images of Dunn, circulated throughout the larger print culture in imperial networks, were mobilized in the metropolitan press either to decry the corruption of a British settler in the face of indigenous difference or demonstrate the ability of the empire to impose lines of order and claims to sovereignty in a foreign land. These depictions would be more starkly drawn in 1882, as Cetshwayo gained two very vocal partisans in London’s press: Lady Florence Dixie and Frances Colenso.

### **Metropolitan Debates: Lady Florence Dixie, Frances Colenso, and Rider Haggard**

While exiled at the Cape, Cetywayo found impassioned advocates in the form of two very different British women: Lady Florence Dixie, the aristocratic feminist author, and Frances

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<sup>368</sup> “John Dunn and Zululand,” *Glasgow Herald* (Glasgow, Scotland), Tuesday, May 2, 1882; Issue 104.

Colenso, the daughter of the infamous Natal Bishop.<sup>369</sup> In 1882, Dixie published two volumes in London both dedicated to advocating fiercely for the Zulu monarch: *A Defence of Zululand and its King* and *In the Land of Misfortune*. For Dixie, Cetshwayo provided a figure for her to advance as a wronged fellow aristocrat, and to cajole an English reading public into critically assessing the political destruction wrought by the Anglo-Zulu War. She took pains to describe Cetshwayo's aristocratic bearing, noble personage, and charm despite a hostile situation perpetuated, in her estimation, by colonial small-mindedness and larger imperial ignorance. Dixie frequently advocated in her books that the removal of Cetshwayo represented a larger moral failing of a cynical British political establishment that could be remedied by an acknowledgement of injustice to a fellow monarch in pursuit of moral rectitude. Ultimately, Dixie's appeals were conservative in nature; she utilized Cetshwayo as a means of advocating for a 'reformed' empire, one that promoted a sense of justice through moral paternalism enacted through social hierarchies. Dixie's lauding of Cetshwayo's nobility, his decency, and humanity did not necessarily stem from a deep-seated appreciation of indigenous struggles, but rather from an identification with a fellow noble personage and a desire to use British power to preserve those social distinctions. While Dixie is uninterested in and indeed directly countered the racist overtures of Natal's settler elites, she advocated for Cetshwayo as both a personal project and as a recognition of shared social status. Ultimately Cetshwayo served as a prop in Dixie's imperial feminism; he offered a means of advancing her position as a female author/journalist in a patriarchal Victorian print world and a fellow member of the elite classes that she wished to remind a British reading public deserved to be saved.

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<sup>369</sup> Lady Florence Dixie was also the sister of John Douglas, better known as the Marquess of Queensbury. Douglas not only gave his name to the Queensbury rules of boxing, but instigated the trial that brought down Oscar Wilde (who had an affair with Alfred Douglas, Florence Dixie's nephew).

In Dixie's estimation, Cetshwayo was a beleaguered monarch caught between his demands as a ruler and the increasingly arduous restrictions placed upon him by an inconsistent British imperial government in the sway of small minded settlers. "For sixteen years," Dixie noted in *A Defence of Zululand*, "the King had been played with and baffled by the English Government," when he merely "endeavoured to assert his just rights."<sup>370</sup> Much of *Defence* sought to neutralize the objections frequently raised in the metropolitan press and by settlers about the excessive predations of Cetshwayo. Using the 'Blue Books,' or annual parliamentary reports, Dixie refuted the arguments of 1878-79 that Cetshwayo was willfully defiant or meddling. In her portrayal, the king himself exercised considerable restraint while trying to control his subjects and obey the myriad, contradictory demands from both Whitehall and Pietermaritzburg.

In Dixie's rendering, Cetshwayo, despite his 'native' state, is intelligent, restrained, and thoughtful. Indeed, Cetshwayo is rather like the metropolitan English to whom she is writing, and pointedly *unlike* the Natal colonists, who were depicted as irrational, anxious, and short-sighted. Dixie played upon the potential snobbery of a metropolitan public in describing the alarmist colonists during the war:

When the news of the battle of Isandhlwana reached the colony many of the inhabitants, animated by the numerous and exaggerated reports of what the Zulus intended to do, became filled with an insane terror. The poison of slander had too deeply filled their minds, and they never paused to think that Cetshwayo had never yet under many provocations invaded the Colony.<sup>371</sup>

In *Defence*, Dixie was quick to assert that Cetshwayo was cautious and loyal to his promises to the British, rather than the perfidious and wanton tyrant that earlier papers had made him out to

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<sup>370</sup> Lady Florence Dixie, *A Defence of Zululand and Its King: Echoes from the Blue-Books. With an Appendix Containing Correspondence on the Subject of the Release of Cetshwayo, Etc* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1882), 14.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

be. Indeed, the terror of the colonists becomes something baseless and unseemly in the face of Dixie's noble Zulu king. In so doing, Dixie traded on an idea of the monarch that fits neatly within 'proper' forms of English masculinity, and depicted Natalians as failing to maintain proper sang-froid in the face of (nonexistent) threats. In this way a powerful aristocratic female journalist used prevailing gender norms to present metropolitan readers with a likeminded noble monarch.

Metropolitan readers of Dixie's impassioned prose were offered a view of Cetshwayo (and the war in general) that saw the British Empire as a noble experiment that had been compromised by a combination of imperial incompetence and colonial cupidity on the ground. The tragedy of Cetshwayo's deposition, Dixie argued, is that a noble monarch, whose power corresponds to that of the upper echelons of British society, has been poorly treated by his inferiors. This problem (and the moral compass of the empire) can be fixed by restoring him to his own position of hierarchical power, a move that would solidify imperial claims of justice in Britain and reinforce the rational, reasoned power of the metropole over the greedy, short-sighted settlers of Natal. "Let England, who advocates justice," declared Dixie in *Defence*, "Wipe out as much as possible the past stain which, in her Zulu policy, has blotted the page of all we hold most noble and sacred."<sup>372</sup>

Dixie offered her readers a firsthand glimpse of the noble king moldering in his confinement at Olde Moulen, near Cape Town in order to press her claim that a lack of justice imperiled the British imperial system. Despite her claims to justice through her support of a fellow noble personage, Dixie could not avoid a form of gendered condescension as she relates her visit with the king. She spoke to Cetshwayo less as a peer and more as a mother to a child,

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 79.

encouraging his resilience through conspicuously masculinist language: “‘Tell Cetshwayo,’ I said to the interpreter, ‘that he is a brave man, and brave men should never give in.’

...[Cetshwayo replied,] ‘I will try, but my heart is sad.’”<sup>373</sup> In spite of this awkwardly paternalistic form of advice, Dixie’s encouragement established a sense of commonality with Cetshwayo in the eyes of the metropolitan reading public. Speaking in common gendered norms—namely that truly brave men are resilient and determined even in the face of discouragement and despair—Dixie worked to humanize Cetshwayo in print, and further galvanize her imagined reader to outrage on behalf of the king (and the idea of a just empire itself). Dixie continued:

Cetshwayo, who has been represented as a cruel bloodthirsty despot and tyrant, possesses that which many white men, with civilisation and education around them, entirely lack, and which they may well envy--*i.e.* a nobility of soul, dignity, and courage in misfortune, which makes him in all he says ‘every inch a king.’<sup>374</sup>

It is here that Dixie’s appeal is at its most explicit: Cetshwayo serves as a framing device for questions of empire, justice, and metropolitan responsibility. It is in his ostensible nobility—a status which has been denied by the short-sighted, the greedy, and incompetent—that the monarch becomes a challenge to the empire. If Britons are complicit in the unjust treatment of such a noble personage, argued Dixie, then what is the empire, truly?

Like Dixie, Frances Colenso arrayed a substantial number of imperial and local sources to construct passionate arguments in favor of Cetshwayo’s release and reinstatement. Colenso was, for all intents and purposes, a Natalian by environment but not outlook, and had lived most of her life within the confines of the colony, although she certainly did not share in any way the

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<sup>373</sup> Lady Florence Dixie, *In the Land of Misfortune* (London: R. Bentley and son, 1882), 421.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

predominant views of settlers.<sup>375</sup> Following her father's virtual exile from the larger settler community, Frances Colenso had grown increasingly involved with African education and indigenous social issues. A staunch opponent of the Anglo-Zulu War and generally of both imperial policy and settler opinion since the 1873 Langalibalele affair, Miss Colenso served as a significant conduit of material and articles to the metropolitan press from Natal, and penned her own critical volumes, the *History of the Zulu War and Its Origin* (1880) and *The Ruin of Zululand* (1884). Unlike Lady Florence Dixie, Frances Colenso did not view Cetshwayo as a fellow nobleman whose nobility of bearing could be marshaled in order to critique British imperial misadventures. Rather, she worked to depict Cetshwayo also as an unjustly persecuted victim of settler avarice and wished to demonstrate the ultimate dark side of the colonial project on the ground. Despite her differing depictions of the Zulu king, she shared with Dixie similar ambitions for writing for a metropolitan audience, namely the encouragement of top-down reforms of the empire in order to return it to an imagined just and moral center. As Michael Lieven argues, Colenso's work "brilliantly analyses British policy but its central thesis is that the policy was marred by mistakes and excesses rather than that a pathology of domination was integral to the policy of Empire and that liberal attitudes could at best be a palliative and at worst a justification and legitimisation of the expansion of empire."<sup>376</sup>

Even more than Dixie, Colenso's works are meticulously researched productions that comb through the archives of the colonial office as well as colonial newspapers to refute point by

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<sup>375</sup> Indeed, both Robert Morell and Jeff Guy argue effectively that Bishop Colenso (and his immediate family) did not reflect settler consensus to such an extent that they were generally and vehemently rejected by most Natalians. That rejection was, of course quite mutual, as the Colensos did not consider themselves to be part of a settler class but rather as part of Britain, and the Empire. See: Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*; Jeff Guy, *The View Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism* (University of Virginia Press, 2002).

<sup>376</sup> Michael Lieven, "Colonel Anthony Durnford: The Imperial Hero and the Contradictions of Liberal Imperialism," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 18 (1998): 45–66.

point the later propagandic assertions against Cetshwayo (and in favor of the Anglo-Zulu War in general). In *The History of the Zulu War* Colenso takes pains to deconstruct assertions of Theophilus Shepstone prior to the war in order to counter claims of inherent evil and savagery that were circulated in colonial and metropolitan presses right before and during the war:

Cetywayo is a man of considerable ability, much force of character, and has a dignified manner...he ranks in every respect far above any native chief I have ever had to do with.' Throughout the despatch, indeed, Mr. Shepstone repeatedly speaks of the king's 'frankness' and 'sagacity,' in direct opposition to the charges of craft and duplicity so recklessly brought against the latter of late.<sup>377</sup>

Colenso understood perfectly that depictions of Cetshwayo had real discursive power, particularly in justifying the need for a costly African invasion to an influential metropolitan British public. It is for this reason that she attacked the rhetorical assaults on Cetshwayo's personage (and the Zulu kingdom in general) that allowed for the war to be prosecuted first in print and then in fact.

Throughout both the *History of the Zulu War* and *The Ruin of Zululand* Colenso held up the image of Cetshwayo as a wronged monarch and a symbol of the corruptions and failings British rule for metropolitan consumption. In so doing, she interpreted both the antebellum and postwar situations in Zululand—and Cetshwayo in particular—as a means of careful moral chastisement for colonial excesses. When describing Cetshwayo's capture by the British for a metropolitan audience, Colenso took care to note the reaction of the major that took the monarch into custody, who describes him as: "a noble specimen of a man, without any bad expression, and the king all over in appearance and manner."<sup>378</sup> Indeed, Colenso noted frequently the positive—and social hierarchical—responses from various British observers, echoing the work of Dixie in presenting Cetshwayo as a fellow monarch to be respected, and one whose masculine

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<sup>377</sup> Frances Ellen Colenso and Edward Durnford, *History of the Zulu War and Its Origin* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1880), 9.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

authority should be constructed as regal and authoritative, despite his enemy combatant and African racial status.

Ultimately, Colenso argued that British imperial officials were out of step with the inherent moral prerogatives within every Briton whether in the metropole or as a settler abroad; it is in this logical configuration then that Cetshwayo offered a litmus test for ‘proper’ British moral action. Such a reaction becomes clear in Colenso’s response to metropolitan critics of her work. Answering charges in London’s *St. James’ Gazette* that her depiction of the Zulu War and the ill-treatment of Cetshwayo smacked of “Anglophobism” (with the presumption that such a depiction erred on the side of excessive “Zuluphilism”), Colenso thundered back:

If patriotism is to love and honour one's own nation and fatherland above others, to rejoice in her virtues and blush for her misdeeds, and to be willing to work and suffer for her sake, then I claim to deserve the name of Englishwoman. But if it means the determination to maintain, regardless of the truth, that all she does is right, to hide and deny her faults, instead of helping to cleanse her from them, and to glory in her success when she is in the wrong, then, indeed, I am no patriot at all.<sup>379</sup>

In Colenso’s estimation, sharing the negative treatment of the Zulu king was not done out of a sense of British shame, but out of love for the ostensible ideals of empire. The depiction of Cetshwayo as an honorable monarch and one sorely abused by the British remains at its core an imperial story. For Colenso, Cetshwayo was valorized as part of her imperial romance; it is an idea of empire that is a moral paragon and righteous protector, but an empire nonetheless that she brought to a metropolitan reading public in the 1880s.

The image of Cetshwayo as an unjustly wronged monarch gained popularity in the British press following his defeat. Not to be outdone, the Aborigines’ Protection Society also solicited multiple comments in metropolitan papers to advance a vision of a humane, just empire.

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<sup>379</sup> Frances Ellen Colenso, *The Ruin of Zululand: An Account of British Doings in Zululand since the Invasion of 1879*, vol. 2 (London: W. Ridgway, 1885), vii–viii.

In 1881, the APS published the writing of John Tengo Jabavu, a prominent Xhosa newspaper editor and Christian intellectual in their regular periodical, the marvelously condescendingly titled *The Aborigines' Friend*. Under the heading “A Native View of South African Questions,” Jabavu weighed forth on multiple issues occurring in southern Africa, offering his own opinion of Cetshwayo’s circumstances:

With all their bravery and preparedness, the Zulus, it has been proved, have never thought of fighting the British Government; and much less would they entertain a thought of that kind after the tragic events that blackened the English name in 1879. At present much personal liberty is required for Cetywayo, and the Aborigines' Protection Society might do well to keep the subject before the public, for, should they attain their end, I think they will have this satisfaction--that far from the forebodings of the unstable-minded on this matter being verified, the permanent peace of South Africa will have been settled.<sup>380</sup>

Jabavu wrote further that restoring Cetshwayo restore for Africans a belief in the magnanimity of the high-minded British nation and challenged members of the APS to continue to provide pressure for the king’s cause. Like Magera Fuze, Jabavu offered a view of British imperial aims that challenged settler interpretations (his article specifically counterposes his views with those of the *Cape Argus*), and sought to maintain a measure of indigenous autonomy at the expense of settler claims. Jabavu’s piece for the APS continued to play up the idea of a noble and just Britain, much in line with that of Dixie and Colenso, although articulated specifically for furthering indigenous autonomy.

Both Dixie and Colenso’s pieces received such attention that they became targets for the writer Rider Haggard, who had just returned from his own sojourn in Natal, where he had worked first as an assistant to the Lieutenant Governor Henry Bulwer and then to Theophilus Shepstone while the latter was on assignment in the Transvaal. Haggard’s five years in southern Africa would provide background which he would use to great effect in writing his massively

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<sup>380</sup> Jabavu, John Tengo, “A Native View of South African Questions,” *The Aborigines' Friend*, December 1, 1881.

popular colonial novels, *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*. In his first major work after returning to London, Haggard quickly capitalized on metropolitan interest in the Zulu king and Natal in general, publishing *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours; Or, Remarks on Recent Events in Natal, Zululand, and the Transvaal* in 1882 (with Haggard's rising popularity throughout the decade, the book went through subsequent reproductions). Writing on the much-discussed Zulu king, Haggard opined:

There has been a great deal of special pleading about Cetywayo. Some writers, swayed by sentiment, and that spirit of partisanship that the sight of royalty in distress always excites, whitewash him in such a persistent manner that their readers are left under the impression that the ex-king is a model of injured innocence and virtue. Others again, for political reasons, paint him very black, and predict that his restoration would result in the destruction, or at least, disorganisation, of our South African empire. The truth in this, as in the majority of political controversies, lies somewhere between these two extremes, though it is difficult to say exactly where.<sup>381</sup>

Haggard's first section explicitly referred to both Dixie and Colenso, although Dixie in particular was singled out by Haggard for her unapologetic association of Cetshwayo with universal kingly virtue and with a profound reverence for fellow noble personages. Although Haggard's color-themed word choice is purposefully flippant, more is at play in this introductory passage. For Haggard, rendering Colenso as a fellow noble personage wrongly treated by the British government was in fact to 'whitewash' him, in effect rendering him equal into privileges of whiteness and demanding certain forms of respect unto the same. Having spent considerable time with Natal's settler society and colonial officials like Bulwer and Shepstone, it is unsurprising that Haggard was unwilling to concede an understanding of Cetshwayo's equality to British settlers, a distinction made by his sardonic deployment and subsequent denial of 'whitewash.' Yet Haggard was also aware of the racialized politics at work in reports back to the metropole (and those operating on the ground in colonial Natal) where Cetshwayo was depicted

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<sup>381</sup> Haggard, *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours*, 2.

as inherently savage, barbarous, and wantonly cruel. These depictions are based in a sense of paramount blackness that link justifications for warfare to a clash between ostensibly civilized and ‘uncivilized’ peoples.

In seeking to respond to the claims of Dixie and Colenso, Haggard sought to utilize raced and gendered norms to both assert his own authority and offer an understanding of the contemporary state of the empire through a discussion of Cetshwayo. Following a brief rehearsal of Dixie and Colenso’s popular publications, Haggard pithily added, “It is all very well to be enthusiastic, but ladies should remember that there are other people in the world to be considered beside Cetywayo.”<sup>382</sup> Haggard painted Dixie and Colenso (and their supporters) as myopic and overly concerned with the fate of Cetshwayo, rather than having a rational and larger view of the colonial situation in South Africa, one of course that he implies that he possesses. Arguing that the metropolitan press failed to take into account the concerns of an anxious white settler population in Natal, Haggard added, “it is very well to sympathise with savage royalty in distress, but it must be borne in mind that there are others to be considered besides the captive king.”<sup>383</sup> *Cetshwayo and His White Neighbours* was, at its core, a claim by a young white male author to have particular knowledge (superior to that of any woman or African) on a popular and well-discussed geopolitical situation. From Haggard’s perspective, Cetshwayo, the Boers in the Transvaal, Natal’s settlers, and the British government itself were all multiple pieces in a larger chess game that must be understood by cool-headed, rational male observers.<sup>384</sup>

Ultimately, Haggard argued for a solution to the problem of Cetshwayo—and Natal in general—through the intervention of ‘proper’ white British masculinity. “If white men are set

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>384</sup> It should not come as much of a surprise to realize that those also match descriptions of a very particular form of masculine rationality.

over Zulus at all, they should be *gentlemen* in the position of government officers, not successful adventurers,” Haggard asserted.<sup>385</sup> This is a pointed rejection of the ‘adventurer’ John Dunn as a suitable replacement for Cetshwayo as a royal ruler, revealing Haggard’s own class prejudices and belief in properly enacted masculinity to be a source of real colonial power, not that of a racially ambiguous colonist/chief, a situation anathema to Natal’s settlers and perplexing to metropolitan observers. Haggard furthers this argument by maintaining that Zulus themselves would prefer such an arrangement, reporting, “It is an odd trait about Zulus that only gentlemen, in the true sense of the word, can win their regard, or get anything out of them.”<sup>386</sup> Haggard’s endorsement of British ‘gentlemen’ as the proper solution to southern Africa’s woes was indicative of the class and era in which he wrote. As Anne McClintock asserts, “Haggard was in this respect representative of a specific moment in imperial culture, in which the nearly anachronistic authority of the vanishing feudal family, invested in its sanctioned rituals of rank and subordination, was displaced onto the colonies and reinvented within the new order of the colonial administration.”<sup>387</sup> Such a view also echoed the view of Natal’s own elite settler families, dubbed by historian Robert Morrell as “the Old Natal Families” (ONFs), who believed that their cultivated sophistication made them uniquely suited to rule over indigenous Africans.<sup>388</sup> Such attitudes spurred the development of settler educational institutions in Natal, in order to create an educated generation of elite leaders who could control native peoples as properly masculine, rational leaders.

Having acknowledged that the question of Cetshwayo was instead a larger question of colonial control and a need for proper, gentlemanly rule, Haggard finally turned to what he sees

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<sup>385</sup> Haggard, *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours*, 42.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>387</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, 239.

<sup>388</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*.

as the central problem to be solved in the wake of the Anglo-Zulu War: the legitimacy of settler colonialism while white emigrants make a tiny minority of the overall population. For Haggard, “Natal might more properly be called a Black settlement than an English colony.”<sup>389</sup> Despite defeating the large and independent Zulu polity to the north of the colony, Natal was not free of its initial contradictions as an indigenous majority settler state. To those settlers that believed that the problem would be ameliorated over time, Haggard instead offered a brutally upfront assessment:

To suppose that the emigrant would go to Natal when he came to understand that it was an independent settlement of a few white men, living in the midst of a mass of warlike Kafirs, when Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, are all holding out their arms to him, is to suppose him a bigger fool than he is. At the best of times Natal is not likely to attract many desirable emigrants.<sup>390</sup>

It is with this final statement that Haggard gets to the heart of the ‘colonial problem’ contained in the descriptions of Cetshwayo—the future of the colony and that of settlement in general.

Haggard’s views mirror those of other British observers in Natal (most notably Lady Barker, writing in 1876), and reflect the larger shift in the colony as settlers began begrudgingly to realize that they would never acquire the numeric predominance and logistical legitimacy they so desired. Haggard suggested that a Zululand protectorate administered by proper English gentlemen would be the dumping ground for any and all indigenous Africans who were unwilling to work for whites or submit to English civil law in Natal. Such a result would ideally lessen the overwhelming black numbers of the colony and also ‘solve’ the question of what to do with Cetshwayo’s kingdom. In the midst of opining by Haggard, Dixie, and Colenso, however, political circumstances were soon to change. Cetshwayo was finally granted his audience to visit London in August of 1882.

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<sup>389</sup> Haggard, *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours*, 70.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

### **Monarch in the Big City: Metropolitan Descriptions of Cetshwayo in London**

Despite the fervent protests of Natal's legislature, and the grave pronouncements of other officials, Cetshwayo was formally granted permission to visit London in 1882. He arrived on Thursday, August 3, 1882, and was accompanied by a flotilla of British reporters, eager to spread information on the Zulu monarch to a metropolitan readership. Papers dutifully reported that Cetshwayo had travelled with servants, a doctor, and an interpreter, noting that no women accompanied him.<sup>391</sup> Immediately after disembarking, Cetshwayo was treated to a circle of cheers from admiring visitors, who wished to welcome the potentate to the metropole. The newspapers also reported on particular exchanges that Cetshwayo had with his fellow travelers upon leaving:

A clergyman, holding out his hand, said very heartily, 'Goodbye, King.'  
'Goodbye,' responded Cetywayo, in excellent English; then turning to one of his companions, he said, in his own language, 'He is going home now he has come to his own people and is going to leave us.'<sup>392</sup>

Despite the mild condescension of praising the saying of the word "good-bye" as an excellent command of the English language, the press coverage of Cetshwayo's landing is significant in that it portrays the king as both an arriving dignitary and a celebrity that fascinated the metropole.

The initial news coverage of Cetshwayo's visit specifically worked to play up the monarch's 'civilized' and fitting royal behavior, directly refuting the press depictions of the previous years, which has emphasized his barbarism:

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<sup>391</sup> The gendered make-up of Cetshwayo's entourage was almost certainly a conspicuous choice, so as to not provide further political ammunition with the apparent moral and social dilemma of Cetshwayo's polygamous relationships being made visible. Indeed, the difficulties of polygamy in a state visit from a Zulu leader would still be a apparent over a century later when South African President Jacob Zuma arrived in London with his most recent bride—to the considerable consternation of the British press. See: Tallie, "Queering Natal Settler Logics and the Disruptive Challenge of Zulu Polygamy."

<sup>392</sup> "The Arrival of Cetywayo," *The Leeds Mercury*, August 4, 1882; "The Arrival of Cetywayo," *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, August 4, 1882.

In his demeanour Cetywayo is most gentle, utterly belying the popular conception which pictures him as a rude and turbulent savage. His intelligence is shown by the questions which he addresses to his interpreters, and his capacity to win men's friendship by the extraordinary sympathy felt with him by the passengers of *the Arab*. He has been, in fact, everyone's friend, and the passengers who left the ship at Plymouth bade him a hearty farewell.<sup>393</sup>

Cetshwayo was thus rendered as a gracious and acknowledging king, whose very royal demeanor challenged the legitimacy of the British conquest of his kingdom. The initial press coverage of Cetshwayo's trip served to advocate for hierarchical modes of respect for a fellow powerful male leader, in turn reflecting a British self-imagining as an orderly, moral, and highly structured society. Thus, to depict Cetshwayo positively as a gracious, engaging, friendly monarch offered a conception of British imperialism that demanded a self-representation as a just and respectable society.

Cetshwayo was certainly aware of the power of the press and its ability to shape imperial discourse. Reports on his visit reveal that the king focused on particular questions that were likely to enhance his cause in the metropole, and demonstrated an astute knowledge of his coverage in the metropolitan press. Multiple papers reported that Cetshwayo considered himself "much aggrieved at the descriptions given of him in the newspapers, 'as if he were a dog.'" Recognizing the importance of the press to both hinder his cause as well as to amplify his own position on southern African politics, Cetshwayo "declared in emphatic tones that there never ought to have been any war, and ascribes the conflict to 'the little grey-headed man' (Sir Bartle Frere) and the newspapers, against the majority of which he is deeply prejudiced. His people he says, want him."<sup>394</sup> While Cetshwayo demonstrated an understanding of the press as a means of pursuing his own claims to restored sovereignty, he did not manage to sway all reporters. In the

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<sup>393</sup> "The Arrival of Cetywayo," August 4, 1882.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.; "The Arrival of Cetywayo," August 4, 1882.

same issue of the *Leeds Mercury* that lauded Cetshwayo's arrival, another reporter sniffed at the entire affair, writing:

Cetywayo has duly reached England, and already we hear that the usual deplorable but seemingly inevitable lionising has begun...the ex-King was besieged by the notoriety hunters of the town. ...It would be well if 'the little grey-headed man,' as Cetywayo designates Sir Bartle Frere, were to make the public of England acquainted with some facts regarding the life and habits of the King when he was supreme in Zululand with which the students of the South African Blue Books are familiar, but of which it is to be hoped the female admirers of the gentle monarch are ignorant.<sup>395</sup>

The dissenting report on Cetshwayo viewed the king's arrival as an ultimate propagandic performance, and an unconvincing one at that. Further, the author sought to subvert the ennobled male power of Cetshwayo in the press by presenting his supporters as simple-minded, credulous women, indeed an echo of Haggard's critique of Dixie and Colenso. While Cetshwayo could and did court public opinion in pursuit of his cause, not all reporters were convinced by his display.

Despite the presence of detractors, Cetshwayo's visit had the intended effect upon the public imagination and government ministers. As the king toured the major centers of British power in London, citizens took to the newspapers on his behalf. Colonel Samuel Dewe White, veteran of British campaigns in India, wrote to British papers in August of 1882, reflecting on Cetshwayo's mission:

Sir,--The presence of Cetywayo in England is calculated not only to excite pity for fallen greatness, but to arouse the conscience of the nation in regard to our dealings with his sable Majesty, whose prolonged captivity cannot be justified either religiously or morally. Sir W. Erle, an earnest patriot in Charles I.'s third parliament, once said that 'The cause of justice was God's cause.' It is of importance, therefore, to know what justice requires us to do in this matter. Let us place our hands upon our hearts, with the sincere desire to ascertain this. Imprimis, it should be considered that Cetywayo, whether he be regarded as a noble savage or a barbarous ruler, at all events fought bravely for the independence of his country against British aggressors, and being eventually conquered, he was unfairly treated in being deprived of those usages of war practised amongst civilised nations, which he was entitled to, because the colour of Cetywayo's skin and his African birth ought not to prejudice his claim to be thus dealt with. In point of fact, the

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<sup>395</sup> "Politics and Society," *The Leeds Mercury*, August 4, 1882.

waging war with the Zulus, partitioning their country, and keeping their King as a prisoner of war are three wrong things we have done. Therefore, prompt reparation ought to be made to Cetywayo by restoring him to his longing subjects, and then doubtless he will enjoy his own again.<sup>396</sup>

In White's estimation, Cetshwayo's civilizational status was irrelevant; whether he be seen as 'noble' or 'barbarous,' the fact remained that he and his male warriors acquitted themselves bravely on the field of battle, and in so doing, deserved recognition and respect by a British government. In the letter, Cetshwayo became something of a cipher for the larger question of the justice of British imperial rule; if the king continues to be held, against morals and proper custom, the question of British justice, and the rhetorical underpinnings of colonial domination become visible. For men like White, Cetshwayo's visit, therefore, offered a prime opportunity for righting colonial arrogance and in so doing, offering a reform of the British system.

As a result, Cetshwayo presented a challenge to the legitimacy of imperial rule, but one that could easily be resolved, particularly in light of more pressing global matters:

Moreover, sound policy also requires the conciliation of the Zulus by the restoration of their King, because our hands just now are quite full with the affairs of Ireland and the Egyptian imbroglio, which makes it necessary that we should steer quite clear of another African war. Lastly it would be wise at once to concede to the claims of justice what otherwise might be ungraciously extorted under a pressure which it would be highly inconvenient to attempt to resist.<sup>397</sup>

For White, Cetshwayo's restoration provided both a needed rhetorical salve to the idea of British justice and a practical consideration for pragmatic imperialists. Recognizing the moral claim of Cetshwayo, White urged British accommodation, lest continued instability lead to yet another imperial war in South Africa, something a government stretched thin by engagements in Egypt and Ireland could not possibly consider. Ultimately, White's observation of Cetshwayo's voyage served to simultaneously encourage British justice while eyeing the inevitable military costs to maintaining hegemony in Natal and Zululand if such a plan were not adopted.

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<sup>396</sup> White, S. Dewe, "A Plea for Cetywayo," *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle Etc*, August 12, 1882.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

The British press meticulously reported upon the movements of the king during his month long visit to London. An eager public could read their fill on his attire, his 'kingly dignity,' and the vicissitudes of his appearance. At every stop, from meeting Parliament to viewing naval installations, Cetshwayo found himself quizzed as to his thoughts on the House of Commons, the royal family, English military might, and a myriad of other aspects of metropolitan life. His responses were frequently circumspect, limited both through the difficulties of translation but also as a result of attempting to project a kingly dignity while simultaneously attempting to convince an ostensibly magnanimous imperial government to restore his position. *The Saturday Review* gently mocked these earnest but empty interviews in their assessment of Cetshwayo's visit, highlighting his description of Prime Minister William Gladstone as "a grand, kind gentleman" and his astute avoidance of representatives of the temperance movement, who sought to obtain a recorded statement that Cetshwayo was firmly against the idea of indigenous drinking.<sup>398</sup>

While journalists freely wrote of Cetshwayo as a native king overawed by the ostensible technological and social wonders of London, these observations also carried within them profound criticisms of the empire. Describing Cetshwayo's touring of military installations, colonial institutions and other structures of power, a London paper described the king as "An African Caractacus," paraphrasing the legendary Celt's observations of Rome after his capture, "How is it possible that a people possessed of so much magnificence could begrudge me my humble kraal in Zululand?"<sup>399</sup> Caractacus, like the Iceni queen Boudicca, offered a frequent source of nationalist pride for British observers in the nineteenth century. William Mason had

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<sup>398</sup> "Cetwayo at the Stake," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, August 26, 1882.

<sup>399</sup> "Comic Papers," *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle Etc*, August 12, 1882.

popularized the proto-Briton in his eighteenth-century poetry, and more recently, Scottish author William Stewart Ross had published a popular poem to “Caractacus the Briton” in 1881.<sup>400</sup> Many contemporary British readers would have been familiar with the story of both his defeat at the hands of a Roman invasion under Claudius, and his subsequent life-saving eloquence before the Senate after being led through a triumphal procession in the capital. While living in Rome after having been spared execution, Caractacus is said to have inquired after the endless avarice of the Romans, nothing that after all of their magnificence they still desired his people’s humble tents. To cast Cetshwayo in the role of the popular nationalist hero was both a provocative and powerful choice that revealed the ambivalences the British press felt toward the Zulu war and possibly the imperial project in southern African more generally. As *The Saturday Review* opined, “An exhibition of a defeated potentate can, at the worst, cause a passing scandal, which might be disregarded if it were accompanied by any considerable advantage.” Yet what was the advantage to be won in the presentation of this defeated monarch?<sup>401</sup>

Depicting the Zulu king as the defeated Briton allowed the British to immediately imagine themselves as a powerful and magnanimous imperial Rome, particularly in their generous hosting of Cetshwayo in 1882, yet it also opened questions of the legitimacy of the war and colonial control over Zululand. Certainly, the notion of imperial conquerors impressed by the resilience and martial prowess of the tribesman fighting for his homeland would flatter the metropolitan British observer, particularly the idea that the empire is rendered more valiant in having defeated a worthy foe. Indeed, this was the case in Thomas Lucas’ 1879 book, *The Zulus and the British Frontiers*, which had described Cetshwayo specifically in the trope of admirable

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<sup>400</sup> William Stewart Ross, *Lays of Romance and Chivalry* (London: W. Stewart and Company, 1881).

<sup>401</sup> “Cetewayo’s Visit,” *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, August 5, 1882.

but safely defeated barbarians, calling him a “Kaffir Caractacus” and even a “savage Owen Glendower.”<sup>402</sup> Yet, the inherent criticism of imperial rapacity provides an unfavorable assessment of the very nature of the conquest. Significantly, Caractacus is very specifically a *British* hero; to place the Zulu king in such a place is to de-center the familiar norms of hero and villain, protagonist and antagonist. To depict Cetshwayo amid the gardens of Kensington or the imperial splendor of the royal family thus provides a substantial challenge to the narrative of British moral superiority and victory—it simultaneously reaffirms the martial skills of the Zulu warriors while undermining the implied greater power of the British in conquering them. By aligning Cetshwayo with Caractacus, British press writers did more than make a well-known classical allusion. They also subverted raced and gendered orders of empire by casting the British conquest as the product of an unrestrained (and therefore unmanly display of) avarice and undercut the racial difference between colonizer and colonized by making the ‘barbarous African’ a stand-in for their own valiant national ancestors.<sup>403</sup>

In addition to providing novelty and interest for a metropolitan public, Cetshwayo’s visit brought the issue of restoration and of larger imperial interests firmly into the center of domestic conversations. *The Saturday Review* declared that Cetshwayo’s visit “would be an insignificant result of carelessness and bad judgment if it were not understood to imply a purpose for restoring him to power,” an act it described as “a question of international law, though that metaphorical branch of jurisprudence was scarcely intended to apply to a captive barbarian.”<sup>404</sup> The description of Cetshwayo as a rude barbarian, a continuation of earlier press depictions of the

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<sup>402</sup> Thomas J. Lucas, *The Zulus and the British Frontiers* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), 182.

<sup>403</sup> Nor was this allusion making unique to the metropolitan press; a sympathetic *Natal Witness* observed that upon his defeat, Cetshwayo, “although such a redoubtable enemy, he is admired by all...[while] his mien was that of a Caractacus.” *Natal Witness*, 11 September, 1879.

<sup>404</sup> “Cetewayo’s Visit,” 165.

king prior to 1880 and steeped generally in firmly racialized discourses of white supremacy, shifted slightly during his visit but never faded entirely from the surface of press reporting.

This is most apparent in the satirical periodical *Fun*'s depiction of the imperial dilemma resulting from Cetshwayo's visit. The piece, titled, "Very Busy (A Duet in Black and White)" began with an accompanying cartoon representing a meeting between John Bull and Cetshwayo, who was drawn in a style of black buffoonery, wearing but not quite effecting the civilizational aspirations offered by British clothing (see figure 2). Indeed, images of Cetshwayo in popular metropolitan media operated within pre-established tropes of comic black savagery; the picture in *Fun* was published in London on August 3, 1883—the very day that the monarch arrived in London. Arguably, Cetshwayo then was simply slotted into this image before his very arrival. The titular poem rendered Cetshwayo fully within a global stereotype of black minstrelsy, speaking with a broad, stereotypical black accent:

Cetewayo and John Bull

C: How de do, sah? Hope you're well, sah?  
     Poor old nigger's turn at last;  
 Didn't like de big sea-swell, sah,  
     Nebber mind, sah, dat is past;  
 Want to go back to my nation  
     Wid some dollars in my hat,  
 Glad to get your invitation.  
     Golly! Won't we hab a chat!

B. Ah! But I'm so very busy,  
     What with Egypt and the Turk  
 Why My head is growing dizzy  
     From this awful press of work:  
 Telegrams or long despatches  
     To be sent to ev'ry clime,  
 Troops and stores shipped oft in batches,--  
     Can't you call another time?<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> "Very Busy: A Duet In Black and White," *Fun*, August 2, 1882.

In addition to the casual racism, the piece presents a fascinating tableau for a metropolitan audience. While Cetshwayo is rendered idiotic and wheedling, the ultimate aims of the visit are made quite clear: the Zulu king has arrived to request restoration, something quite inconvenient to an overstretched British imperial state at present. The conversation is, therefore, offered as both an admission of imperial limits—resources currently overcommitted to other global affairs—as affecting the decisions of British policy. The minstrel-king and the imperial Englishman offer a final meditation upon the Anglo-Zulu War itself in the closing lines, “We can't always have our pleasures/For we've learned to our regret,/How that military measures/Nice arrangements may upset.” While papers covered both the pageantry and performance of the visit, the cartoon offered by a satirical paper illustrated the central concerns of the king’s visit—how to extricate both imperial and local entanglements caused by colonial military conflicts. Three weeks later, at the close of the king’s visit, the magazine published a similar image of Cetshwayo once again in minstrel-inspired clothing, celebrating his upcoming restoration (see figure 3). Even while reporting on the successful media tour of an African potentate, the editors at *Fun* depicted the king in stereotypical imagery that signified a larger sense of black male buffoonery.



Figure 2, "Very Busy: A Duet In Black and White," *Fun*, August 2, 1882.



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Figure 3, Ibid.

### Conclusion: Dunn, Cetshwayo, and the Imperial Stakes of Racialized Masculinity

In his campaign against Cetshwayo's return, Dunn articulated race and gender as more than an identity; in his words, white masculinity was a *tool* that served to delineate the spaces of British sovereignty. Arguing in favor of his position as an irreplaceable go-between, Dunn himself recounted that following the defeat of the Zulus in 1879, a principal *induna*, Undhlandaga, announced to the British officers assembled that:

“Our word is but one—we wish no more for a black King—we wish to a white one, and the white one we mean is that one (pointing to me) John Dunn. He knows us, and knows our ways and we know him and like him.” The rest of the men then said “our voice is one, we say the same.”<sup>406</sup>

In this rather self-serving retelling, Zulu observers recognized—and appropriately valued—Dunn's white masculinity, desiring him as a preferable alternative to a black king. Yet these claims to racialized masculinity could be equally mobilized by Cetshwayo *against* Dunn. While imprisoned at Oude Molen in the Cape Colony, the deposed king grouched, “I will not say much of John Dunn; he does not know of the doings of the white man, he lives in the Zulu country, and although he is white he is black like the native; the Zulus *could only be ruled by white men proper, and not by men like John Dunn.*”<sup>407</sup> Maneuvering to regain his kingdom, Cetshwayo disparaged his former advisor for the same intimate knowledge that Dunn valorized. In Cetshwayo's missive, white masculinity itself was still upheld as the ideal and is paradoxically employed as a source of binding authority by the Zulu king (in order to indirectly assert his claims to kingship under British authority), yet Dunn was no longer white. He instead had become *black* through his excessive proximity, unable to marshal the racialized power that served as the base for British sovereign claims over the land and peoples of Zululand. Dunn's

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<sup>406</sup> John Dunn, *Cetywayo and the Three Generals* (Printed by the Natal Printing & Publishing Company, 1886), 134.

<sup>407</sup> BPP, C.3466: 48, enc. 2, Cetywayo kaMpande to Bulwer, June 2, 1882, p. 80. Emphasis is my own.

proximity has led to a blackness that marked him as separate and in resistance to the lines of power delineated by a settler state. As such, his body was no longer able to pass through the whitened, colonial spaces of the newly conquered. Cetshwayo's letter argued instead that Dunn, rather than mobilizing his white masculinity, has surrendered it.

Dunn would not take such attacks lightly. In response to the constant challenges to his authority by Cetshwayo and his supporters, John Dunn wrote an open letter to be published in the metropolitan press in an attempt to sway public opinion. In it, Dunn states that

I beg to enter my solemn protest against such a step as being most injurious to the prestige of all Englishmen in Africa. What will the word of any English Government be worth among the numerous races of blacks in this country in the future if such an event as his restoration takes place? Surely the present government of England cannot have the welfare of the English in Africa nor of the natives in view by taking such a step.<sup>408</sup>

Like Cetshwayo, Dunn called upon hierarchies of race and masculinity to make his claim to continued authority in Natal against the Zulu monarch. In his reasoning, if Cetshwayo is restored, the word of the British government will become baseless in the eyes of credulous Africans, thus limiting the sense of constant power and authority integral to the projection of white male superiority. Dunn asserted that instead of restoring British imperial legitimacy through a recourse to justice, as Frances Colenso or Florence Dixie would allege, Cetshwayo's reinstatement would instead further destabilize the authority and power of the empire—and more alarmingly, the 'welfare of the English in Africa' who will be endangered by angered indigenes.

The metropolitan press coverage of Cetshwayo's visit and the continued descriptions of the oddity of Chief John Dunn also illustrated the profound differences between metropolitan views and those of settler elites in Natal. As the British public discussed the various merits of

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<sup>408</sup> "John Dunn and Cetywayo," *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, October 23, 1882.

restoring Cetshwayo, the Natal Legislature emphatically denounced any and all attempts to return Cetshwayo to authority as a pronounced threat to settler order and colonial sovereignty. “I hope the world will know that none of us wish these chiefs back again,” thundered legislator J.C. Boshoff in 1881. “Let them have a pension if you like; let them sit at big dinners in London, but never let them come back to Natal again. Let them be an example to the other chiefs, that after once being sent away, they can never come back here.”<sup>409</sup> The Natal Legislature passed formal protests regarding the idea of Cetshwayo’s return to Zululand from 1880 to 1882, and continued to insist that to reinstate the Zulu king would undo the hegemony they wished to enact upon the land and peoples of both Natal and the semi-independent Zulu polity to the north. Recognizing the increasing popularity of the Zulu monarch in the British press, John Robinson attempted both a respectful tone towards Cetshwayo while denouncing his return as mischievous and threatening:

I say nothing against Cetywayo himself. I think he is to be greatly admired in many respects. He has borne his captivity in a way which would do credit to any civilized sovereign. I only desire that he shall be kept far apart from an opportunity of doing further mischief. If we look at the history of the world, we shall find that there are few instances of sending back conquered kings as vassal potentates. We know what happened after Elba, and we know that history has endless repetitions.<sup>410</sup>

Robinson granted Cetshwayo a portion of begrudging credit for his ‘noble’ suffering, which resembles any ‘civilized sovereign’ (it goes without saying, however, that Robinson firmly implied that Cetshwayo was neither of these). By comparing Cetshwayo to Napoleon, Robinson hoped to highlight the danger and disruption of the king’s return, and seeks to convey to the imperial government the danger posed by such a return.

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<sup>409</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--Ninth Council, from October 6, to December 14, 1881*, vol. III (Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis and Sons, 1882), 129.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, III:186.

Ultimately, the return of Cetshwayo would be seen by Natal's colonists as a fundamental abrogation of their presumed right over indigenous lands and bodies by a presumptuous British government. As usual, J.C. Boshoff put it most bluntly in the halls of the Legislature when he reflected upon Cetshwayo's proposed release in 1880, "I hope that our beloved Queen will soon begin to get tired of the blacks, and that she will give them over *in toto* to the Colonists of South Africa, and say 'I cannot do anything with them, and now I hand them over to you, the Transvaal, the Free State, the Cape Colony, and Natal; do with them as you like, but do not be too hard on them.' If this were done we should soon have long and lasting peace."<sup>411</sup> To Boshoff's inestimable disappointment, this was not to be the case. Many in the Colonial Office viewed their role as the ostensible protectors of indigenous interests as acting counter to the wishes of rapacious settlers, and refused to give way, much to settler fury. Recognizing the anger of settlers in Natal at presumed British meddling, the satirical periodical *Funny Folks* neatly summed up the conflict between imperial government and settler state:

The ridiculous old Motherland is always getting into hot water with her distinguished South African descendants. First it is a Zulu war, which any number of Colonial Wellingtons, if you had only trusted them, could have finished in four days. And then the puny Imperial Government weakly declined to flay Cetywayo. ...Observant students of our South African critics must by this time have come to the conclusion that the only safe way of dealing with South Africa is to let South Africa rule us. We cannot please them. They are always angry.<sup>412</sup>

At its core, the *Funny Folks* article satirized the larger complaints of Natal's settler class by taking them to their furthest conclusion—the idea that the colony can tell the 'motherland' ultimately what it should do. The debates characterized by both *Funny Folks* and the Natal Legislature around the fate of Cetshwayo reveal the larger questions of imperial sovereignty, settler power and indigenous autonomy extant in late nineteenth century Britain and Natal.

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<sup>411</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council, 1880 Pt. 2*, II:226–27.

<sup>412</sup> "Angry South Africa," *Funny Folks*, December 3, 1881.

To their inevitable disappointment, the protests of the settler legislators came to nothing; Cetshwayo was reinstated as king of the Zulu people in 1883. The Zulu monarch had successfully manipulated media discussion and mobilized discourses in his favor, and a newly appointed government under Gladstone was glad to acquiesce. However, Cetshwayo's reinstatement was not a complete reversal of settler aims. While the imperial government returned the king in an about face on colonial policy of the previous years, they did not restore him to the entirety of his kingdom. While Dunn was deposed as the leader of his eponymous kinglet, Cetshwayo was only granted a out a third of his former lands. A third of the land to the south was established as a buffer state between Natal and the king in order to placate Africans who had sided against the king, and as a sop to the offended Natal government. The far more dangerous factor, however, was the formal establishment of an anti-Cetshwayo faction led by Zibhebhu. While Dunn and settler leaders had been defeated in the immediate contest over imperial decision making, Cetshwayo was left in a fundamentally precarious position upon his restoration in 1883. The king's hard fought victory was not to last. In 1883, Zibhebhu attacked and destroyed Cetshwayo's main encampment at Ulundi, and the monarch fled into the forest, only to die a few short months later. It is this moment that historian Jeff Guy has considered to be the real destruction of the Zulu kingdom, rather than its defeat by the British in 1879.<sup>413</sup> The rebellion of Zibhebhu against Cetshwayo and the subsequent civil war opened the kingdom to the competing interests of indigenous Africans, rapacious settlers, and opportunistic Boers from the Transvaal. Cetshwayo's son, Dinizulu was forced to acknowledge Boer claims to part of Zululand in order to gain forces necessary to defeat Zibhebhu, an echo of the complex political maneuvering his grandfather, Mpande kaSenzangakhona had enacted a half century earlier. The

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<sup>413</sup> Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*.

chaotic fighting of the post-Cetshwayo period provided the pretext for the imperial government to formally acquire Zululand as a British colony in 1887. A decade later, Natal's settlers seized their opportunity to annex Zululand outright as part of their colony, part of a larger move to establishing formal settler minority rule in the years after Responsible Government was achieved in 1893.

Despite the sharp reversals of Cetshwayo's fortunes, the metropolitan print circulation of the Zulu king demonstrates the connection between discourses of race and masculinity and the larger political and social changes that resulted in colonial Natal. The brief-lived return of Cetshwayo kaMpande offers an example of mobilized discourses of race and gender that allowed an indigenous man to demonstrate that he was 'every inch a king' in the eyes of British public opinion and imperial estimation. As a result, Cetshwayo and his supporters were able to override the desires of settler leaders in Natal, and in so doing demonstrate the limits of settler authority.

### **Conclusion: Race, Masculinity and the Work of Unsettling Colonial Natal**

In 1894, while discussing the future of education for white children in the British colony of Natal, Prime Minister Sir John Robinson paused to describe his aspirations for the next generation of settlers: “We hope that the future Natalians will not only be full men, but will be strong men in every sense of the term; strong men as regards their own capacity to do their work in life, and strong men as regards their ability to become useful and patriotic citizens.”<sup>414</sup>

Robinson’s aspirations for future Natalians took place in the first full Parliamentary session after the colony had received Responsible Government, an official measure of autonomy from direct British control extended to settler dominions. These ‘future Natalians’ were bound up in debates over local settler sovereignty, imperial prerogatives, and the fraught relationship between colonial desires and indigenous responses. It is no coincidence that the Natalian Robinson invokes is explicitly gendered and raced; the ultimate settler-citizen in his formulation is a white male. This white male Natalian idealized by Robinson must demonstrate his strength and ability to work as a true participant in an emergent settler polity. Unspoken in Robinson’s speech is the simple fact that this valorized strength of character, this demonstration of usefulness, depends upon both the occupation of indigenous land and the exploitation of African and Indian labor. Robinson’s speech points to the development of race and masculinity as emergent identities within the collisions of nineteenth century colonial Natal. These identities became, in the process of colonial occupation, laden with power and significance. I have used the term ‘racialized masculinity’ to describe attempts by men like Robinson to marshal these identities to justify settler claims to authority. How racialized masculinity operated in colonial Natal, and

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<sup>414</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--First Parliament, from April 25 to July 11, 1894*, vol. XXII (Pietermaritzburg: Wm. Watson, 1894), 103.

more importantly, how it revealed the stakes for sovereignty, indigeneity, and claims of belonging in settler colonial spaces has been the main concern of this dissertation.

Ultimately Robinson's speech typifies larger shifts in colonial Natal at the end of the nineteenth century. After obtaining Responsible Government in 1893, Natal's settler elites sought to shore up their own authority as a settler colony under minority rule. The 1890s witnessed attempts to pass increasingly restrictive legislation that organized Indians and Africans under the permanent control of the white minority. Simultaneously, political and economic changes bound Natal ever more tightly to the other settler polities in southern Africa. The Boer War and eventual defeat of the Transvaal and Orange Free State resulted in a more tightly connected labor market, one that could more effectively lure African men from Natal to the gold and diamond fields. In addition, the granting of Responsible Government led to increased settler control over indigenous and Indian affairs, limiting the potential for imperial intervention. By 1910, when Natal joined the Union of South Africa as a settler-minority dominion, the united settler governments had begun a systematic stripping of non-white suffrage and access to land, moves that would culminate in the hardening of legal means of exclusion under apartheid. The twentieth century saw the entrenching of raced and gendered hierarchies of power in Natal and South Africa more generally. These hierarchies of power, however, have their origin in the second half of the nineteenth century in Natal. It has been the purpose of this dissertation to examine how these hierarchies were created and utilized in this colonial period.

*Limits of Settlement* takes as a significant influence much of the historiographical work developed as part of the so-called 'imperial turn' in the last two decades of British history. These approaches emphasize the interconnectivity of the 'domestic' and 'colonial' realms, privileging

social formations that challenge such an easy dichotomy between at home and away.<sup>415</sup> When read alongside constant and creative indigenous attempts to respond to and reinterpret the terms of British claims of sovereignty, official metropolitan fears that settlers would be unable to maintain a discretely bounded area of control allow us to see how empire rarely functioned as a core-peripheral models have suggested, with power emanating from metropole to exterior regions. The disjuncture between the aspirations of officials and the actual experiences of colonists provides meaningful challenges to dominant rhetorics of empire. Studying how bodies move through colonial and frontier landscapes—and importantly, how multiple observers *interpreted* these movements—allows for an understanding of how power operated within an imperial context that acknowledges *both* empire’s incredible capacity for violence and the continuously incomplete attempts at enacting hegemony. Natal in the latter half of the nineteenth century provides an ideal site for such study, particularly as the settler population tended to identify themselves with Britain and the empire, even after the Boer War and on the eve of incorporation into the Union in 1910.<sup>416</sup>

In this dissertation I take aim at historical interpretations that either privilege the idea of a domestic/imperial divide (where empire happened ‘over there’ and was completely unknown to and non-influential in the domestic lives of metropolitan observers), or the idea that empire was

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<sup>415</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and The’ Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 1995); Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*; Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, illustrated edition (University of Illinois Press, 2008); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 1998); Antoinette Burton, *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Duke University Press, 2005); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>416</sup> Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest, *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910: a New History* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989).

an accidental development largely controlled by top-down action through Whitehall.<sup>417</sup> I instead argue that nineteenth century British imperialism can be best understood as a kaleidoscopic array of overlapping connections.<sup>418</sup> Ties of print, affection, commerce, resistance, and migration linked men and women in Natal to varied and constantly changing points across the imperial landscape. To describe these points of connection as kaleidoscopic requires a moment of explanation; such a device provides symmetrical arrangements through mirrors, which refract only to the extent that exact repetition creates new arrangements.<sup>419</sup> Of course, the mimetic effects created between Natal and other points in the empire were far more aspirational than properly replicative. When settlers agitated for Responsible Government, they specifically drew upon precedents in other settler colonies and sought to define their political situation against a variety of crown colonies throughout the empire, although they did not immediately reproduce conditions that occurred anywhere else. Likewise, Indian arrivants articulated a sense of communal British subjecthood stretching from India to Natal to London when attempting to resist the settler state's racialized legislation, particularly in relation to alcohol in the 1890s. These purposeful invocations of other places within the empire demonstrate a profound, overlapping, and ever-changing assemblage of locations in pursuit of a variety of aims.

Exchange between metropole and colony certainly did happen, and it undoubtedly operated with

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<sup>417</sup> Bernard Porter, *The Absent-minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002).

<sup>418</sup> This is more in keeping with the web-like, refractory, and multi-faceted views of imperial connections argued best by Ballantyne, Burton, Mawani, and Perry. Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race*; Ballantyne and Burton, *Moving Subjects*; Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Univ of British Columbia Pr, 2009); Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

<sup>419</sup> For this insight I am indebted to Jean Y. Lee.

a power imbalance in favor of the metropole. But average citizens were aware of the empire, and did debate the meaning and significance of imperial reach and (inter)national politics, as I make clear in Chapter five. The interactions between Natal and the wider empire were myriad, mutable, and multidirectional as bodies and goods traveled within and without the colony.

The kaleidoscopic connections that linked Natal throughout the empire, particularly as a contemporary settler state, become salient through the discussions of race and masculinity that surround debates, laws, and resistance in the colony. As British settlers, Indian laborers, African inhabitants sought to claim a sense of belonging in the colony, they interacted with, threatened, and directly confronted each other in Natal. The race and gendered identities that they co-created in relation to each other worked to structure the hierarchical formulations that undergirded settler society in Natal. The very nature of colonial occupation as well as land and labor appropriation required forms of discursive rationale. Settler notions of racial superiority and of patriarchal access to land were not fully formed on arrival but arose in the daily collisions of varied actors in the colony. While discursively created through quotidian interactions, these ideas had material import: their creation helped to shape material realities of dispossession, legal restriction, and government actions against indigenous peoples and Indian laborers. The piecemeal legal solutions to separate Africans, Indians, and Europeans occurred through a lengthy process of trial, error, and innovation on the ground. When John Robinson declared in 1894 that “I think we may lay down as an axiom that the franchise right is a race privilege,” he first referenced the history of interactions between Africans, Indians, and Europeans in the colony and made comparison to other settler societies to justify an idea of a whites-only vote in

the colony.<sup>420</sup> Likewise, the 1880 debates over the Clothing of the Natives Bill revealed the histories of racial creation and hierarchy in the colony. Arguments for legally mandating Africans to be clothed relied primarily on the dangers that could arise from African male servants in proximity to young European children, an aspect of colonial service that had occurred for the previous decades in Natal. Various legislators then asked if clothing laws applied to Indians as well, and jokingly asked if they as white men were to be compelled to be clothed through legislation.<sup>421</sup> The constitutive creation of racial categories then became calcified through legal action in Natal.

This is not simply to argue that the colonial period in Natal, particularly after 1879, was some form of undifferentiated ‘negotiation’ between settlers, indigenous peoples, and Indian migrants. Far from it; the settler state possessed considerable coercive power, supported by military might. Yet the attempts of settler elites to use state power to secure full advantage often shifted, faltered, or even failed in the face of resistance from Africans and Indians. Historians of early colonial Natal have frequently stressed the limited power of the state and settler society in particular. Michael Mahoney has characterized the state in the eyes of indigenous Africans as ‘too weak to hate’ and relatively unable to constrain their movements beyond token pronouncements. Rob Morrell has described early Natal as a colonial backwater with a minor settler population and without the means to enforce its implied authority.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Assembly 1894*, XXII:576.

<sup>421</sup> Natal (Colony), *Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal: Second Session--Eighth Council, from November 6, 1879 to February 19, 1880*, vol. I (Pietermaritzburg: Vause, Slatter & Co, 1880), 308–9.

<sup>422</sup> Mahoney, *The Other Zulus*; Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*.

Structuring this dissertation around questions of legitimacy and belonging, particularly pivoting upon the axes of race and masculinity, has allowed me to understand long-standing questions within colonial/imperial history. One question in particular is that of the economic coercion that fundamentally underpinned colonial policy in the British Empire of the late nineteenth century. Undoubtedly, British colonies—crown as well as settler—were established in pursuit of resources and the securing of particular modes of production that benefitted the imperial state. Indeed, anxieties about proper forms of race and masculinity played fundamental roles in the pursuit of these economic objectives. While my methodology is deeply influenced by the work of critical theorists and cultural historians working primarily within the fields of indigenous studies and queer theory, this is not to presume that such observations are inattentive to the root economic structures that supported settler colonialism in Natal and elsewhere. On the contrary, I have learned through my study of colonial cacophonies that race and masculinity could frequently serve as significant forces, visible through moments of rough colonial consensus, marshaled by a variety of actors.

Consequently, this dissertation takes seriously the contention that race and gender did not exist simply in the realm of the identitarian or ‘merely cultural,’ divorced from the larger economic, legal, and political structures of colonial Natal.<sup>423</sup> As a colony of British settlement, Natal was organized around a racialized hierarchy that privileged settlers and their descendants explicitly over the indigenous inhabitants and subsequent Indian migrants both socially as well as economically. As I argue in the dissertation, the establishment of ‘Native Law’ and orthodox forms of marriage—for settlers as well as for indigenous peoples—pivoted upon questions of

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<sup>423</sup> Judith Butler, “Merely Cultural,” *Social Text* no. 52/53 (1997): 265–277.

state recognition of ‘proper families.’ These families were undoubtedly connected to the political economy of the settler state. While opprobrium surrounding the believed impropriety of polygamy and *ilobolo* filled both newspapers and speeches in the Legislative Council in the 1850s and 1860s, white settlers relied upon indigenous demands for cattle in marriage negotiations in order to compel them into working on their farms for a wage. As Keletso Atkins has argued, indigenous social customs were seen by many settlers merely as obstacles to be removed to the achieving of European prosperity—a prosperity ironically curtailed by the endemic racism of the settler class.<sup>424</sup> I would argue further that this racist hierarchizing was not simply stubbornness on the part of Europeans that rendered them immune to economic opportunities; rather, it was the very discursive *and* economic mechanism that undergirded the entire settler project in Natal, even if it worked against their immediate material interests. The ‘dilemma’ surrounding African polygamy and other marriage practices existed expressly within the conflict of settler economic coercion and the effective resistance that indigenous social formations offered in the face of such pressure. As Butler has argued, “the regulation of sexuality was systematically tied to *the mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy,”<sup>425</sup> and in no place was this truer than in nineteenth-century Natal, where settler legislatures argued over the proper forms of marital formation for whites, Indians, and Africans with an eye specifically to the viability of the colonial project.

Likewise, the restriction of alcohol and marijuana laws in nineteenth century Natal along racial lines demonstrates more than a simply cultural reading of settler colonialism. Both forms

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<sup>424</sup> Atkins, *The Moon Is Dead!*, 2–4.

<sup>425</sup> Butler, “Merely Cultural,” 272.

of intoxicants represented commodities grown and created within the confines of the colony, but more importantly, the consumption of intoxicants by nonwhite peoples in Natal served as a drag on settler economic productivity that demanded the compulsion of people of color. Thus, the multiple attempts of settlers to render drinking a white (and relatively male) monopoly throughout the nineteenth century bespoke specifically raced forms of citizenship within Natal, but it also demonstrated the socioeconomic conditions of the colony itself. For Africans and Indians, drinking and smoking cannabis could be an act of embodied resistance against colonial officials that wished to monopolize their labor. As theorists Eric Williams and Stuart Hall have demonstrated, race serves not as a fig-leaf covering the larger, lurking economic substructures of imperialism; racialization instead frequently conditions the very modalities of economic domination.<sup>426</sup>

Nineteenth-century Natal was more than a small British settler colony on the southeastern coast of Africa. It was a space of recurrent collision between a variety of peoples—British merchant, indigenous African, Indian migrant among them—where the logics of settlement and the politics of belonging refracted and cast multiple shadows across the landscape. While British settlers arriving in Natal imagined themselves as part of a larger contemporaneous movement of emigration and occupation that stretched across the globe, the specificities of Natal's demographic developments and the constant negotiation of indigenous peoples challenged this aspirational development. To live in Natal in the second half of the nineteenth century meant responding to a settler state that increasingly attempted to control the economic, social, and

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<sup>426</sup> Stuart Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies," *Rethinking Marxism* 5, no. 1 (1992): 10–18, doi:10.1080/08935699208657998; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Capricorn, 1966).

political dimensions of the colony, but never managed to fully subordinate its occupants. Recourse to stabilizing forms of whiteness and masculinity became the primary means by which both the emergent settler state sought to monopolize claims to legitimacy and rightful occupation as well as the arena in which other actors challenged the very assertions of that state. By studying discrete yet interlocking aspects of the colonial project in Natal—questions of state control over marriage and social reproduction for settlers as well as indigenous peoples, the legal managing of alcohol and cannabis, the civilizational claims of the ‘mission field’ over African and settler bodies, and finally, the rendering of that very project back in print in the heart of the empire—I maintain that race and masculinity were powerful organizing factors utilized by multiple groups desiring to claim legitimacy and belonging in a highly contested space. Looking at race and masculinity in Natal does more than simply illuminate the inner workings of a multiracial, complex colony in southern Africa. Rather, such a view allows us to see how questions of occupation, belonging, indigeneity, and settlement, played out both in Natal, and across the wider expanse of the British Empire, challenging easy claims to power and authority, or at the very least, hoping to ‘unsettle’ them.

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